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ABSTRACT

This guide provides kindergarten teachers and administrators with practical advice on implementing the Alberta Learning "Kindergarten Program Statement" in their classrooms and schools in the Canadian province of Alberta. Chapter 1 of the guide includes information about kindergarten in Alberta, the developmental characteristics of most kindergarten children, six guiding principles providing a framework for kindergarten programming, and learner expectations from the Kindergarten Program Statement. Chapter 2 describes the learning environment in the kindergarten classroom, including helpful ideas on establishing the classroom community, and enriching play in the kindergarten classroom. Chapter 3 provides assistance in planning and implementing a kindergarten program and in assessing, evaluating, and reporting on children's learning. Chapter 4 relates to meeting the differing needs of kindergarten children, including children speaking English as a second language, children in French immersion or Francophone kindergarten programs, and children with special needs. Chapter 5 describes the partners involved in planning and implementing an effective kindergarten program and the home/school/community connections that are critical to children's learning success. Four appendices describe common developmental patterns from birth to early primary school level; present stories of practice connecting the content of Chapters 2 through 5 with children, teachers, and classroom; present ideas to help teachers reflect on their practice and identify areas for growth; and include sample forms for classroom use. (Contains a 121-item bibliography.) (KB)

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KINDERGARTEN

Guide to Implementation
2000

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Some Web sites are listed in this document. These sites are listed as a service only to identify potentially useful ideas for teaching and learning. The responsibility to evaluate these sites rests with the user.

The primary intended audiences for this document are:

Administrators	✓
Counsellors	✓
General Audience	
Parents	
Students	
Teachers	✓

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FOREWORD

The *Kindergarten Guide to Implementation: Sharing Visions, Sharing Voices* has been developed by Alberta Learning with help and support from teachers, administrators, parents and other professionals across the province. Its purpose is to provide teachers and administrators with practical advice on implementing the *Kindergarten Program Statement* in their classrooms and schools.

This guide is a testimony to the collaborative efforts and the generosity of committed professionals and parents working together on behalf of Kindergarten children in our province. The collective wisdom of its many contributors will assist teachers and administrators to deepen their understanding of what it means to work and learn alongside young children.

The *Kindergarten Guide to Implementation: Sharing Visions, Sharing Voices* can help you:

- discuss and reflect upon your understanding and beliefs about child development and learning
- focus on young children and what each child is expected to know and be able to do as a result of Kindergarten experiences
- make instructional decisions based on the *Kindergarten Program Statement* and the needs, interests and abilities of children
- support connections across all the learning areas
- plan for and manage the learning environment, and choose effective and appropriate learning strategies and experiences
- respond to and meet the differing needs of children in your Kindergarten classroom
- assess and evaluate children's learning and progress, and share this information with parents and children
- communicate with parents of children in your classroom and reflect upon the role of parents as partners in their children's education
- develop effective working relationships with the partners involved in planning and implementing the Kindergarten program
- foster home/school/community connections that support children's learning success
- make links to professional literature and further reading.

Special features of the guide that represent the contributions of children, teachers, administrators, parents and other partners include:

- **photographs and children's work** that provide visual representations of learning experiences and activities in Kindergarten.
- **vignettes** that act as written illustrations of the learner expectations
- *Stories of Practice*, Appendix B, that connect the content of the guide with Kindergarten children, teachers and classrooms, and present different perspectives and possibilities.
- *Self-reflection*, Appendix C, that provides questions to assist you in reflecting on your understanding of children and your classroom practice and in identifying areas for growth.
- *Teacher Ideas*, Appendix D, that provide practical and useful information and sample forms for classroom use.

Most Alberta Learning documents and information related to Kindergarten are available on the Alberta Learning web site at <http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca>.

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"Come to the edge …
Come to the edge.
We can't. We're afraid.
Come to the edge.
We can't. We will fall!
Come to the edge.
And they came.
And he pushed them.
And they flew."
Guillaume Apollinaire

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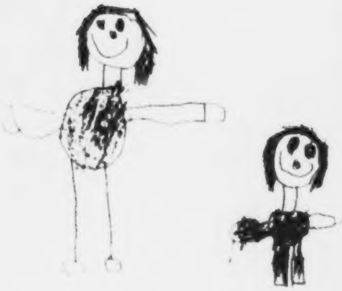

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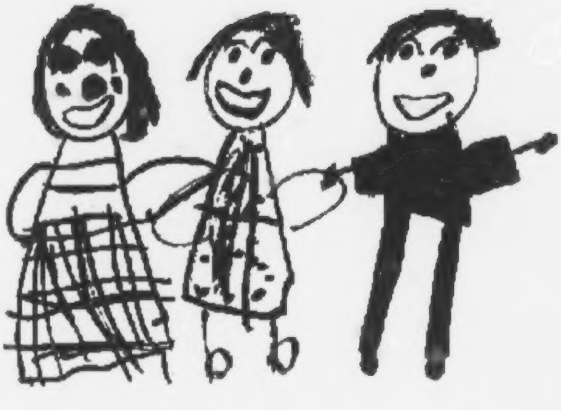
> *"I believe the children are our future.*
> *Teach them well, and let them lead the way.*
> *Show them all the beauty they posses inside.*
> *Give them a sense of pride to make it easier.*
> *Let the children's laughter remind us of how we*
> *used to be."*
>
> Linda Creed

CHAPTER ONE

The Context for Learning



CHAPTER ONE ... AT A GLANCE

This chapter sets the context for working with Kindergarten children and their families. It includes:

- information about Kindergarten in Alberta
- the developmental characteristics typical of most children in the Kindergarten year in the social, physical, intellectual, creative and cultural, and emotional areas
- the six guiding principles that provide a framework for Kindergarten programming in Alberta
- information about learner expectations from the *Kindergarten Program Statement* for each of the six learning areas, through:
  - a summary of the learning area
  - description of classroom environment
  - vignettes that act as written illustrations of the learner expectations
- *Continuum of Learning* that provides common patterns of development from birth to early primary is included in Appendix A.

KINDERGARTEN IN ALBERTA

> *"All the child is ever to be and become, lies in the child, and can be attained only through development from within outward. The purpose of teaching and instruction is to bring ever more out of man rather than to put more and more into man."*
> Friedrich Froebel

Early childhood is a unique and special time of life. Kindergarten is a learning community in which children are encouraged to grow creatively, culturally, emotionally, intellectually, physically and socially.

The term Kindergarten—literally, "children's garden"—originated in 1837 with Friedrich Froebel, a German educator and philosopher. Froebel believed that both environment and education contribute to a well-rounded personality. He recognized the educational value of play and hands-on experiences with artistic materials and equipment. Because Kindergarten was to supplement the nurture of home, Froebel also encouraged the involvement and cooperation of parents in the classroom setting. North America was introduced to Froebel's ideas in the mid-19th century, when German immigrants established Kindergartens for their children. Alberta's first Kindergarten dates back to the early years of the 20th century in Lethbridge.

"You are unique. In all of the world there is no other child exactly like you. In the millions of years that have passed, there has never been another child like you."
Pablo Casals

The terms Kindergarten and Early Childhood Services are often used interchangeably to describe early childhood programming in Alberta. However, "Kindergarten" refers specifically to the education program for children, and "Early Childhood Services" refers to the broad coordinated system of local and provincial programs that meet the developmental and special needs of young children and their families. The Kindergarten program is an important part of Early Childhood Services. In Alberta, parents decide if their child will participate in Kindergarten or other programs provided for children who are under 6 years of age, as of September 1.

HOW YOUNG CHILDREN LEARN AND DEVELOP

Early childhood is a significant period in human development. Independence, initiative, decision making, creativity, the ability to learn, the ability to relate to others and feelings of self-worth all have their beginnings in early childhood.

"(T)he physical self is only part of the self. We must be concerned also with the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual self, and clearly these are not discrete. We separate and label them for convenience in discussion but it may be a mistake to separate them sharply in curriculum."
Nel Noddings

Young children have individual intellectual, physical, emotional, social and creative needs that are interrelated. The development of the intellect is influenced by emotional, social and creative growth. Kindergarten programs address all dimensions of a child's development.

Knowledge of individual children and of general principles of child development can help teachers make thoughtful and appropriate decisions about instructional practices that meet individual and group needs, interests and goals, personal traits, preferred learning styles and developmental levels.

The following developmental characteristics are typical of most, children in the Kindergarten year.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Children are becoming more socially oriented. They make friends with children of their own age, although these friendships may change frequently. They are learning to share, cooperate and play in groups. They are increasing their awareness of a variety of social behaviours and situations, such as being friends, taking turns, being fair and having conflicts. Adults, especially family, are still very important; their support and approval helps children adjust to unfamiliar situations.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

"Learning is active. It involves reaching out of the mind."
John Dewey

Children who enter Kindergarten are moving into a time of slower physical growth after the rapid growth of younger years. They are learning to use all of their senses, but their vision and hearing are not yet fully developed.

Their control and flexibility varies. They have better control of their large muscles than their small muscles. They continue to develop abilities, such as running, hopping, climbing, balancing and jumping. They may have some difficulty with small materials, such as writing tools, scissors and shoelaces. They are increasing their ability to control and coordinate movements, such as throwing, kicking and catching a ball.

Although children are full of energy, they tire easily and recover quickly. Sitting still for long periods of time may be difficult for them, so a balance of active and quiet times is important.

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

"The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery."
Mark Van Doren

Children gain an understanding of objects, relationships and events in their immediate experience by observing, exploring, imitating and doing. They are developing fundamental thinking skills related to their direct experiences along with their reasoning, memory and problem-solving skills. They are beginning to plan and think ahead, but still often think and act in the here-and-now. They continue to see things from their own perspective but are becoming more able to see the views of others. Their ability to pay attention for longer periods of time and their memory is increasing.

Children's listening and speaking vocabularies increase rapidly during this time. They love to talk and are often heard thinking as they talk out loud to themselves. Growth occurs in their ability to stay on topic, take turns and tell stories. They ask many questions about the world around them. Children experiment with the sounds of language and begin to express their ideas in pictures and writing. They develop a "sense of story" through listening, reading and viewing.

Play provides a safe context within which concepts and skills can be practised and applied.

CREATIVE AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

"The most creative environments in our society are not kaleidoscopic … in which everything is always changing…. The researcher's laboratory, the artist's studio … is deliberately kept predictable … because the work at hand … is so unpredictable."
Lucy McCormick Calkins

As they explore and experiment, using a variety of approaches and materials, children generate and transform ideas in their own way. They need people to listen and respond to their personal ideas and feelings. They enjoy creating original works of art, inventing new lyrics to familiar songs and poems, experiencing movement, and experimenting. In dramatic play, young children experiment with different roles and discover new solutions to problems. The process of creating can be as important to the child as the product.

Teachers recognize and support cultural diversity as they interact and communicate with the families of children in their class. They help shape the way children think about and interpret the world around them by encouraging and respecting the sharing of cultural experiences through a variety of perspectives.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

"The child loves and trusts before he thinks and acts."
Johann Pestalozzi

Children experience and express feelings about who they are, what they are like, and what they can do. They develop independence, decision-making skills and initiative.

Young children often display their emotions easily, intensely and visibly. They are developing the ability to differentiate between their own emotions and those of others and are learning socially appropriate ways to express emotions. They may also express fears and show anxiety when separated from familiar people, places, and things.

Children want to do things themselves to demonstrate growing confidence and independence. They are ready to take on more responsibilities and are developing a sense of self, as different from others. Experiences that nurture and contribute to their feelings of adequacy and worth are important.

PRINCIPLES OF KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMMING

Young children begin learning in a variety of environments—at home, in daycare and in the community. They come to Kindergarten from diverse backgrounds and with a variety of experiences.

"The best preparation for being a happy and useful man or woman is to live fully as a child."
The Plowden Report

The purpose of Kindergarten is to provide learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate in order to meet the diverse needs of children and promote a positive attitude toward lifelong learning. A child whose developmental needs have been met is more likely to grow into a self-reliant, responsible, caring and contributing member of society. What young children learn will influence their future learning experiences, personal development and interdependence.

Six guiding principles, described in the *Kindergarten Program Statement*, provide a framework for Kindergarten programming in Alberta.

Principle 1: Young children learn best when programming meets their developmental needs.

Children develop through similar stages but at individual rates, and they need differing amounts of time to develop common understandings.

The Kindergarten program recognizes and supports each child's prior knowledge, skills, attitudes, learning pace, personal traits, interests and goals, and preferred learning styles. The Kindergarten program is adapted and modified to meet individual and group needs, interests and developmental levels. Assessment is an ongoing part of each child's daily learning. Based on the observation of each child, assessment is used to provide feedback to the child and parents and to plan the learning environment.

Principle 2: Young children develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare them for later learning.

"Why – why – why! … Ask it of everything your mind touches, and let your mind touch everything!"
Ann Fairbairn

Young children are naturally curious and eager to learn. They are active learners who learn through a variety of means. Purposeful play is an important mode of learning for children. Children at play are highly motivated and capable of intense concentration. Through organized activities and purposeful play, children explore and experiment with their environment. They clarify and integrate information and concepts encountered in their previous experiences.

"The kinds of minds that children come to own are profoundly influenced by the kind of experiences they are able to secure in the course of their lives ... Mind is the product of opportunity ... we can do a great deal about the conditions and opportunities the young have during the course of their development."
Elliot Eisner

The Kindergarten program provides concrete, first-hand experiences with a variety of materials and people to help children build a solid foundation for later abstract learning. It fosters creative thinking, stimulates the imagination, and encourages children to express their ideas in a variety of ways.

The Kindergarten program provides a secure environment that encourages risk-taking and that leads children to value themselves as capable and competent learners. The more diverse a child's experiences, the greater the foundation for forming ideas, developing language, solving problems and expressing thoughts and feelings.

Principle 3: Young children with special needs, through early intervention strategies, develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare them for later learning.

The Kindergarten program is based on the belief that all children can learn. Some young children have special intellectual, emotional, sensory, communication and/or physical needs that affect their learning. Others experience disadvantages that influence their learning, such as frequent changes of residence, lack of fluency in the language of instruction or limited experiences in the early years.

The Kindergarten program helps to identify children with special needs and provides additional support to them and their families. This allows children to increase their potential for learning and to make the most of learning opportunities. Coordinating appropriate learning experiences and adapting and modifying instructional strategies help meet the identified special needs of children.

Principle 4: Young children build a common set of experiences through interaction with others.

"Knowledge begins in experience."
Johann Pestalozzi

When children enter Kindergarten they become involved in a much larger world and develop relationships with others, including children of their own age. Children benefit from developing positive relationships with their peers, teachers and other adults in a variety of group situations.

The Kindergarten program provides opportunities for children to develop language and accomplish new learnings through social interaction and cooperation with others. It helps children develop an awareness of individual similarities and differences, and share family and social traditions. Through the Kindergarten program, children expand their focus beyond their own needs and interests as they move into a more formal learning environment.

Principle 5: Parents have the opportunity for meaningful involvement in the education of their young children.

Parents play a central role in the lives of their children. They are responsible for meeting their children's physical, social and emotional needs. Parents are their children's first and most important teachers, and family influences are lifelong. The Kindergarten program supports and respects the dignity and worth of the family. The values and beliefs of the home are acknowledged, and the cultural diversity of families is recognized.

When children begin Kindergarten, parents and teachers form a partnership to support learning at home and at school. The Kindergarten program builds upon the learnings children have already acquired in their home and community settings. Parents are encouraged to enhance and extend the knowledge, skills and attitudes their children develop in the Kindergarten program.

Schools provide many opportunities for parents to participate in their children's education. Parental involvement is beneficial to the children, the parents themselves and the Kindergarten program.

Principle 6: Coordinated community services meet the needs of young children and their families.

"What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that most of the community want for all its children."
John Dewey

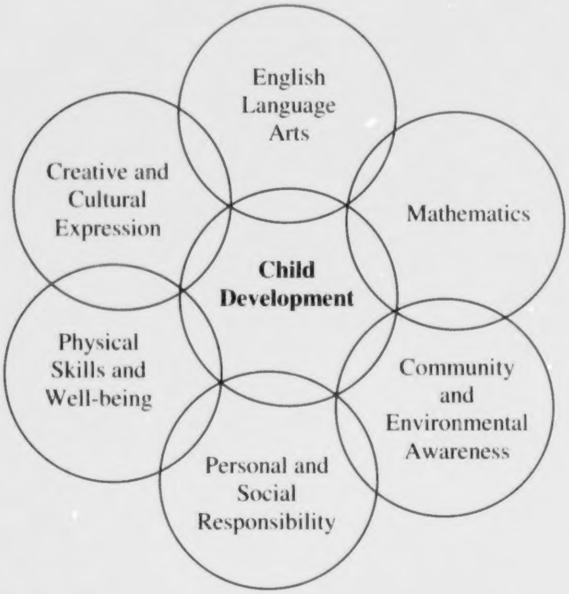
Coordination of services supports the physical, emotional, social and learning needs of children. The Kindergarten program plays a role in the coordination of community services for young children and their families.

The Kindergarten program provides information to parents about available community services to assist them in meeting the needs of their children. Community services may include health, social and family support agencies; recreation and cultural associations; and a wide variety of other groups who work with children in the community.

WHAT CHILDREN LEARN IN KINDERGARTEN

The *Kindergarten Program Statement* provides clear learner expectations for child development in six learning areas.

"The universe is a child's curriculum."
Maria Montessori


English Language Arts
Creative and Cultural Expression
Mathematics
Child Development
Physical Skills and Well-being
Community and Environmental Awareness
Personal and Social Responsibility

Learner expectations in the English language arts and mathematics learning areas are the same as the outcomes for Kindergarten in English language arts and mathematics in the *Program of Studies: Elementary Schools.* Learner expectations in the other four learning areas are integrated and focus on the early learnings in science, social studies, physical education, health and the fine arts.

The expectations of the six learning areas are interrelated and meet the social, physical, intellectual, cultural, creative and emotional needs of young children. These learning areas describe the learnings that young children accomplish not only in the Kindergarten program, but also in their homes and communities. The learning areas provide a transition to the subject area expectations of elementary schooling.

Young children learn in an integrated way, and many of the learnings identified in this program statement will be accomplished simultaneously. It is intended that the learner expectations will be integrated through learning activities that are developmentally appropriate for young children.

Some children have already achieved some of the learnings described in the *Kindergarten Program Statement* when they enter the Kindergarten program. Most children will achieve these learnings before they enter Grade 1. Others will continue to develop them during the primary school years. The learner expectations of the Kindergarten program statements should be adapted and modified to meet the needs of all children.

GENERAL AND SPECIFIC LEARNER EXPECTATIONS

Within each learning area, children's learning is described in terms of general and specific learner expectations.

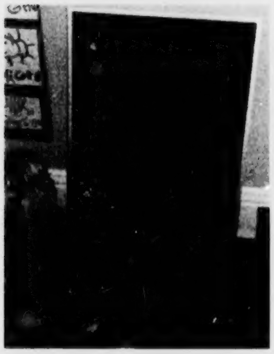
General learner expectations are the broad statements identifying what students are expected to know and be able to do at the end of the Kindergarten year. They provide an overview of the important learnings children accomplish in the six learning areas. These expectations are useful for setting a focus for the year, in program planning and in discussing and reporting on children's progress to parents.

> *"Children possess great potential—potential it is the privilege of the teacher to perceive and empower."*
> Edwards, Gandini and Forman

Specific learner expectations are included for each general learner expectation. They state in detail the knowledge, skills and attitudes students are working towards achieving. These expectations are useful for planning instructional strategies and activities and in organizing learning centres. They can serve as indicators that children are accomplishing the broad learnings described in the general learner expectations.

GENERAL LEARNER EXPECTATIONS FOR KINDERGARTEN

These general learner expectations describe the broad learnings in all learning areas in the *Kindergarten Program Statement.*



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Five statements serve as the foundation of the program of studies for English language arts from Kindergarten to Grade 9.

- The child listens, speaks, reads, writes, views and represents to explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.
- The child listens, speaks, reads, writes, views and represents to comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts.
- The child listens, speaks, reads, writes, views and represents to manage ideas and information.
- The child listens, speaks, reads, writes, views and represents to enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.
- The child listens, speaks, reads, writes, views and represents to respect, support and collaborate with others.

"To know the world we must construct it."
Pavese

MATHEMATICS

Expectations are organized within four strands that form the foundation for mathematics learning from Kindergarten to Grade 12, and act as connectors across the grades.

Number

- The child describes, orally, and compares quantities from 0 to 10, using number words in daily experiences.
- The child demonstrates awareness of addition and subtraction.

Patterns and Relations

- The child identifies and creates patterns arising from daily experiences.

Shape and Space

- The child demonstrates awareness of measurement.
- The child sorts, classifies and builds real-world objects.
- The child describes, orally, the position of 3-D objects.

Statistics and Probability

- The child collects and organizes, with assistance, data based on first-hand information.

COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

"Some of my most complex problems in physics could have been solved by children playing in the streets. They have not given up the ways of knowing lost long ago."
J. Robert Oppenheimer

- The child demonstrates curiosity, interest and a willingness to learn about the environment and community.
- The child uses materials in the environment and community and becomes aware of how others use materials.
- The child demonstrates awareness of self and similarities and differences between self and others.
- The child explores familiar places and things in the environment and community.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- The child develops positive attitudes and behaviours toward learning.
- The child accepts and practises responsibility.
- The child demonstrates and practises independence.
- The child experiences and expresses feelings in socially acceptable ways.
- The child demonstrates awareness of qualities that contribute to positive relationships in families and with friends.

- The child develops positive relationships with others.
- The child contributes to group activities.

PHYSICAL SKILLS AND WELL-BEING

iWTTOTHTRAPRSGW.

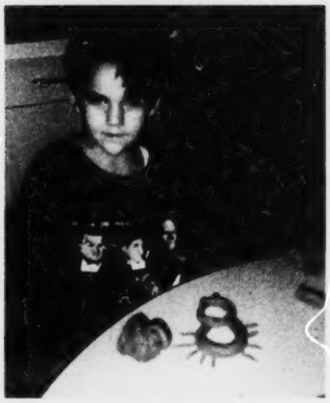
- The child acquires basic locomotor, nonlocomotor and manipulative skills through developmentally appropriate movement activities in a variety of environments.
- The child develops fine motor and perceptual motor skills through participation in a variety of activities.
- The child develops attitudes and behaviours that promote a healthy lifestyle, wellness and safety for self and others.
- The child assumes responsibility to lead an active way of life.

CREATIVE AND CULTURAL EXPRESSION

> *"Imagination is the highest kite that can fly."*
> Lauren Becall

- The child explores self-expression through creative thought and through language, art, movement, music and drama.
- The child solves problems, and uses past experiences to develop new ideas.
- The child becomes aware of various forms of expression, cultural groups and traditions.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES



Illustrative examples have been developed for the Kindergarten level of the English language arts, mathematics and physical education programs.

The illustrative examples are not prescribed, but support these programs of study by indicating some of the ways in which children can demonstrate the learning of specific outcomes at the Kindergarten level.

The illustrative examples for English language arts, mathematics and physical education are available from the Learning Resources Centre or on the Alberta Learning web site at <http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca>.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

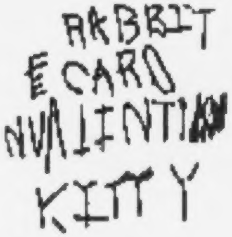
The *Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Program of Studies*, 2000 sets out division level outcomes for learning in technology. Kindergarten teachers should be familiar with the Division 1 level outcomes and work with the Grades 1 to 3 teachers to develop a scope and sequence that would include appropriate learnings for Kindergarten children.

The technology outcomes are intended to be interrelated and integrated with the expectations in the six learning areas of the *Kindergarten Program Statement*. Technology is best learned within a context of application in concrete and meaningful activities, projects and problems.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

SUMMARY

Language is the basis of all communication. Language learning is an active process that begins at birth and continues throughout life. Children learn language as they use it to communicate their thoughts, feelings and experiences; establish relationships with family members and friends; and strive to make sense and order of their world.



The aim of English language arts is to enable each child to understand and appreciate language, and to use it confidently and competently in a variety of situations for communication, personal satisfaction and learning. Children become confident and competent users of language through many opportunities to listen and speak, read and write, and view and represent in a variety of combinations and relevant contexts. All the language arts are interrelated and interdependent; facility in one strengthens and supports the others.

> *"Truly each new book is as a ship that bears us away from the fixity of our limitations into the movement and splendour of life's infinite ocean."*
> Helen Keller

In Kindergarten, children participate in shared listening, reading and viewing experiences using texts such as picture books, fairy tales, rhymes, stories, photographs, illustrations and video programs. They share stories using rhymes, rhythms, symbols, pictures and drama to celebrate individual and class accomplishments. Children draw, record and tell about their own ideas and experiences and participate in class and group language activities.

"Within the word we find two dimensions ... reflection and action ... if one is sacrificed even in part the other immediately suffers. To speak a true word is to transform the world."
Paulo Freire

Children begin to use language prediction skills when stories are read aloud and to ask questions and make comments during listening, viewing and reading activities. They read their own names, as well as some words that have personal significance. Children categorize objects and pictures, and represent and share ideas and information about topics of interest. They form recognizable letters, print their own names, and explore and experiment with new words and terms.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

To facilitate and encourage language learning in Kindergarten:

- provide a variety of non-verbal and verbal experiences, in and out of the classroom
- challenge children to grow through experimenting and risk taking; listen to them as they try to explain phenomena in the classroom; use open-ended questions, clarifying and extending children's answers
- focus on meaning as well as form, in order to encourage active construction of understanding
- provide a variety of books at various reading levels in as many centres as possible
- provide a variety of materials to encourage writing and representing experiences; e.g., paper, pencils, pens, art materials, markers, staplers, hole punches, computers and computer programs
- create opportunities to speak with adults in meaningful situations
- model many forms of written and spoken language use
- allow for opportunities to witness and take part in a variety of situations where language is used; e.g., drama productions, reading buddies, conflict resolution
- encourage collaboration skills by giving children opportunities to discuss in groups, build on others' ideas and plan and work together to meet common goals
- encourage children to display their work and share it with others.

"Books, to the child, are so much more than books—they are dreams and knowledge, they are a future, and a past."
Esther Meynell

VIGNETTE

> *"The best way to get a good idea is to get a lot of ideas."*
> Linus Pauling

In small and large group settings, children gain confidence in speaking about personal experiences. Children learn to listen and ask questions on the topic under discussion. Print and pictures can help prompt children to talk and listen. The teacher models questions and responses.

During a theme on pets, children bring photographs of family pets to share at circle time.

One child shows a photograph of the family pet dog.

Child:	This is my dog. Her name is Sally.
Teacher:	What does Sally like to eat?
Child:	Dog food and big bones.
Second child:	Does your dog do tricks?
Child:	She can jump. She catches the frisbee.
Third child:	Where does she sleep?
Child:	She gets on my bed, but she's not supposed to.
Teacher:	I guess she sees that your door is open, and sneaks in. Let's look closely at the picture of Sally. What colour is she?

MATHEMATICS

SUMMARY

Mathematics is a common human activity, increasing in importance in a rapidly advancing, technological society. Children need to become mathematically literate in order to explore problem-solving situations.

Children begin to develop problem-solving skills that they will continue to expand and refine throughout their schooling, as they construct personal meaning about new mathematical ideas. They also begin learning to use the seven interrelated mathematical processes—communication, connections, estimation and mental mathematics, problem solving, reasoning, technology and visualization.

The main goals of mathematics education are to prepare children to use mathematics confidently to solve problems, communicate and reason mathematically, appreciate and value mathematics and commit themselves to lifelong learning.

In Kindergarten children explore the mathematical strands of number, patterns, shape and space, and data analysis by working with appropriate materials, tools and contexts. They count and compare objects, and demonstrate awareness of addition and subtraction through role-playing and manipulatives. They identify and create patterns and learn about measurement by classifying, matching, describing and comparing familiar materials. Children describe, sort and build real-world objects and learn to collect and organize information related to their world.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

> *"Thinking … is a soundless dialogue, it is the weaving of patterns, it is a search for meaning. The activity of thought contributes to and shapes all that is specifically human."*
> Vera John-Steiner

To facilitate and encourage mathematics learning in Kindergarten:

- provide opportunities for mathematical experiences that connect the simple with the complex and the concrete with the abstract
- use manipulatives and technology to address the diversity of learning styles and developmental stages of students
- value and respect each child's way of thinking, so that the child feels comfortable in taking risks, asking questions and offering opinions
- make mathematics learning more meaningful by applying mathematics in everyday living; e.g., cooking centre, props in the block centre
- facilitate opportunities for children to work individually, with partners and with groups
- pose mathematics-related problems, with authentic connections to classroom and everyday life; e.g., graphing growth of a plant, facilitating equal sharing of materials
- integrate ideas from art, music and movement; e.g., repetitive phrases, clapping/stepping patterns, rhythm, colour and design
- encourage children to talk about mathematics activities and explain or represent how they solved problems or obtained answers.

VIGNETTE

> *"A child is a discoverer. We teachers can only help the work going on."*
> Maria Montessori

Children use pictures and materials to tell stories and represent mathematical ideas. They learn about the processes of addition and subtraction through using manipulatives such as felt cutouts. The teacher extends the learning by asking questions.

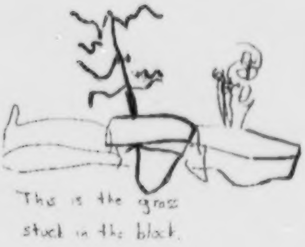
At the felt board, two children are telling a story about birds.

First child:	Two birds are sitting on the tree. (Puts two felt birds on the tree.)
Second child:	What if more birds came? (Finds four felt birds and puts them on the tree.)
First child:	Look! The branch is cracking. They're too heavy, some have to fly away.
Second child:	OK, two birds—go! (Removes two felt birds.)
Teacher:	(Joins in.) So how many birds are left on the tree?
Children:	1, 2, 3, 4 … 4.

COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

SUMMARY

Children explore, investigate and describe their community and environment by asking questions, solving problems and using their senses. They identify familiar shapes, symbols and sounds, and recognize similarities and differences in living things, objects and materials. They begin to acquire information from selected sources and generate ideas to make personal sense of the environment.



Children explore the design, function and properties of a variety of natural and manufactured materials. Using simple tools in a safe and appropriate manner, they select and work with a variety of materials to build structures. They explore scientific and aesthetic concepts, using sand, water, blocks, clay and other materials, and begin to use some technology appropriately.

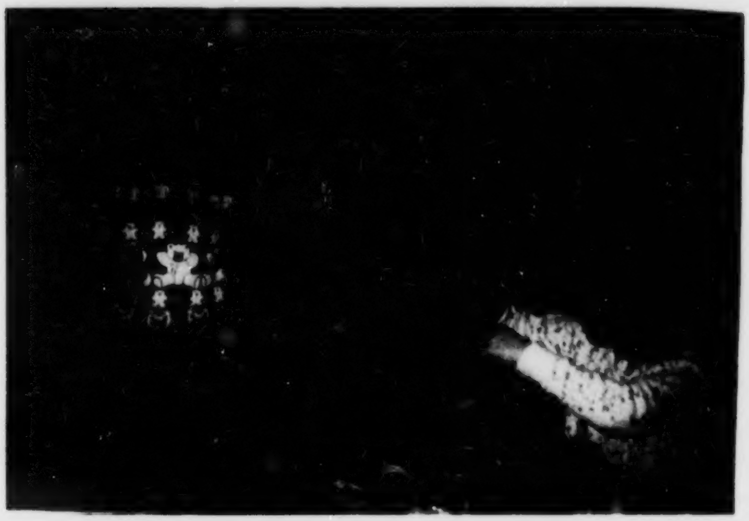
Children become aware of diversity in the uniqueness of self and others by describing feelings, special interests, events and experiences shared with family and friends. They begin to acknowledge and express personal feelings and emotions, as well as appreciating the strengths and gifts of self and others. They learn about homes, family life, familiar places, and people who work and help in the community. They role play familiar home and community situations and activities. Children recognize seasonal changes, colours and shapes in the environment, and familiar animals in their surroundings.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

To facilitate and encourage learning in community and environmental awareness in Kindergarten:

> *"Our task must be to free ourselves . . . by widening our circle of compassion to enhance all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."*
> Albert Einstein

- select topics that help to familiarize children with their immediate surroundings
- provide structured experiences that sensitize children to the diversity among peoples and cultures
- allow opportunities for children to explore the physical nature of their environment in learning centres, such as sand, blocks, water and science
- arrange a variety and diversity of trips/visits about the school, playground and community so children can explore and observe familiar objects and environments
- provide first-hand sensory experiences related to daily life
- have a wide variety of resources and materials readily available for exploration
- encourage children to become active in caring for their community; e.g., playground clean-up, adopt-a-grandparent.



VIGNETTE

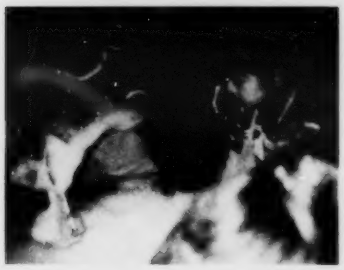
As children work with a variety of materials, they explore ways of building that involve making decisions about purpose, function and design. They develop vocabulary to describe what they are doing. Children learn to work together to solve problems and find ways to be helpful to others. The teacher facilitates learning by helping children define the problem and identify alternative solutions.

> *"The teacher is a guide and director; he steers the boat, but the energy that propels it must come from those who are learning."*
> John Dewey

At the Block Centre, the children are building roadways and bridges. One child is setting a plank on the upturned end of a rectangular block. It wobbles and almost falls over. A second child is watching with a square block in his hand while a third child walks up to the plank carrying a truck.

Teacher: Susan, that board looks wobbly. Bogdan, maybe if we put your block under here it will help.
(Bogdan places his block under the plank.)
Teacher: Well, the bridge is not very stable, is it? What can we do?
George: I'll put my truck here. This is a strong truck. The bridge won't move. (Places the truck on top of the plank, over the rectangular block.)
Teacher: Well, do you think that will work, if the truck has to sit on the bridge all the time?
Susan: The bridge still isn't right. We need more blocks.
Teacher: Okay, you go and get some.
(Susan comes back with a block the same size as Bogdan's and places it on top of Bogdan's. It reaches the plank.)
Susan: That fits. Now, the bridge won't wobble.
George: Oh yeah! Now I can drive my truck over the bridge.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



SUMMARY

This learning area focuses on personal and social management skills necessary for effective learning across all subject areas. Development of personal and social skills takes time and occurs at different rates as a result of each child's experiences. In Kindergarten, children begin to develop and practise skills that they will continue to enhance throughout their lives.

By participating actively in learning tasks, trying new things and taking risks, children begin to develop positive attitudes and see themselves as capable of learning. Children are curious and learn to adapt to new situations. They begin to follow rules and deal with routines in a school environment. They become more independent and learn to take some responsibility for selecting and completing learning activities.

Children begin to learn about themselves as the basis for healthy interactions with others. In Kindergarten, children develop friendship skills and have opportunities to demonstrate caring and make a contribution to others. They learn to express their feelings in socially acceptable ways and show respect and a positive caring attitude toward others. They take turns in activities and discussion and contribute to partner and group activities by working cooperatively, giving and receiving help, and joining in small and large group games and activities.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

To facilitate and encourage learning in personal and social responsibility in Kindergarten:

"Kindness is more important than wisdom; and the recognition of this is the beginning of wisdom."
Anonymous

- plan learning experiences that provide children with opportunities to work together in order to:
  - learn to share ideas and materials
  - learn responsibility for their behaviour
  - work out problems
  - cooperate with others
  - learn how to enter a group
  - appreciate and respect others
  - develop a healthy and positive self-concept
- provide opportunities for children to self-select an activity and complete it independently
- provide a rich environment of materials and resources to encourage children to participate actively in learning activities
- assign appropriate classroom tasks and responsibilities to children
- choose stories at circle time that facilitate discussion on topics such as feelings, friendship and responsibilities
- find ways in which all children can feel they make a contribution to classroom life.

VIGNETTE

As children participate in activities in learning centres, they learn how to share, to get along with others and to express their feelings in appropriate ways. The teacher intervenes, as necessary , to help children move play into more positive directions.

At the Dramatic Play Centre, the children are involved in role playing imaginary characters.

First child: You can't play here.
Second child: I got here first.
First child: No you didn't.
Second child: I did so. I was here before you and I went to get a drink. That's my ship.
Third child: It's everyone's ship. There's lots of room.
First child: (Yelling.) No, there's not.
Teacher: (Comes over.) What are you playing?
First child: Megasaurs.
Teacher: Why are the megasaurs arguing?
Second child: They're mean. They like to fight.
Teacher: What do they do when they're not fighting?
Second child: They fly with big wings
Teacher: Can you show me how you fly?
First child: We can all fly together.

(First child moves to an opening behind the door in the dramatic play centre. Second child marches in and out of the doorway. First child goes to get capes to wear. The play continues.)

PHYSICAL SKILLS AND WELL-BEING

> *"Look at your body. What a wonder it is! Your legs, your arms, your cunning fingers, the way they move … you have the capacity for anything. Yes, you are a marvel."*
> Pablo Casals

SUMMARY

Physical activity is vital to all aspects of normal growth and development. Early childhood is the time to begin the development of active and healthy lifestyles. Children need assistance to develop the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to consistent involvement in physical activity. The aim of physical education is to enable children to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to lead an active and healthy lifestyle.

Health and life skills involve learning about the habits, behaviours, interactions and decisions related to healthy daily living and well-being. In Kindergarten, children begin to develop personal responsibility for health and learn about personal safety and ways to prevent and reduce risk. The aim of health education is to enable children to make well-informed healthy choices and to develop behaviours that contribute to the well-being of self and others.

"Motion is the context of living. We find meaning by and in our doing."
Robert Kegan

Through movement, games and activities using equipment, such as balls, bean bags and hoops, children develop coordinated movement, balance and stability. They develop finger and hand precision and eye–hand coordination through activities in which they use objects like beads, blocks, puzzles and scissors.

Children develop attitudes and practise behaviours that promote wellness and an active and healthy lifestyle by choosing to participate in physical activities, becoming aware of healthy food choices and learning to observe safety rules.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

"To know how to suggest is the great art of teaching. To attain it we must be able to guess what will interest; we must learn to read the [child] as we might a piece of music. They by simply changing the key, we keep up the attraction and vary the song."
Henri Frederic Amiel

To facilitate and promote physical skills and well-being in Kindergarten:

- provide opportunities for indoor and outdoor movement activities
- offer a variety of experiences incorporating apparatus work, games, equipment and dance experiences
- use a variety of equipment suited to the age and strength of young children
- provide frequent, short opportunities for physical motor play
- provide opportunities for manipulation of a variety of small pieces/materials
- introduce activities/games that foster cooperation rather than competition and encourage participation
- provide opportunities to become aware of and plan for healthy eating
- introduce experiences to help children recognize and practise safety rules; e.g., fire drills, personal safety, awareness of harmful substances.

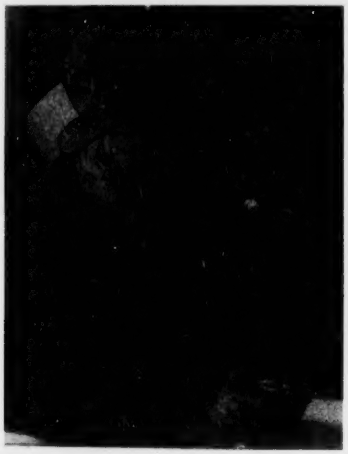
VIGNETTE

In group activities, children enjoy the preparation and sharing of food, often for classroom snacks. Children talk about different kinds of foods and learn about making healthy food choices. During food preparation, the teacher or another adult helps children follow directions and develop vocabulary.

"Genuine learning always involves dialogue and encounter."
Clark E. Moustakas

At the cooking centre a small group of children are working with a parent to make fruit salad.

Parent: Let's name the fruits that we have to make our salad today.
First child: Apple, orange, banana, and I'm not sure …
Parent: Who knows the name of this fruit? It's small, kind of brown and has a fuzzy skin.
Second child: I know, it's kiwi. We have it at home.
Parent: Right, you'll see kiwi is juicy once we cut it in half. That's all the fruit we have for our salad today. What do we do first?
Third child: We wash the fruit.
First child: But not the bananas.
Parent: Right. We've already washed our hands, now we have to wash the fruit. Then we can peel it and cut it up. What is your favourite fruit?
First child: Apples. They're crunchy.
Parent: Yes, it feels like you've cleaned your teeth after you've eaten an apple.
Third child: I like raspberries best, from Grandma's garden.
Parent: There are lots of other fruits we could have in a fruit salad.
Second child: Grapes would be good.



CREATIVE AND CULTURAL EXPRESSION

"Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once [the child] grows up."
Pablo Picasso

SUMMARY

Children explore and express their thoughts and feelings through visual arts, music, drama and movement. They become aware of their own imagination and creativity and that of others as they interact with a variety of materials and respond to various forms of expression. They begin to develop an appreciation of the fine arts, as they become aware of why and how ideas and feelings are communicated in many ways. As children share ideas and listen to diverse views and opinions, respect for and collaboration with others is fostered.

Through the visual arts, children experiment with diverse media to represent their ideas and experiences in two and three dimensional forms. By viewing and responding to natural forms, everyday objects and artworks they begin to learn about how we see and interpret visual images. Children express themselves through movement and individual and group musical activities, songs and games. They listen to and begin to appreciate a variety of musical instruments and different kinds of music. Through dramatic play and movement children grow in self-awareness and self-confidence and develop their imaginative and creative thought.

Children explore a variety of ways to pose and solve problems, using past experiences to develop new ideas. They experiment with using familiar materials in new ways and choose media, tools and materials to represent their ideas and experiences. They begin to connect their own experiences with forms of artistic expression in the world around them.

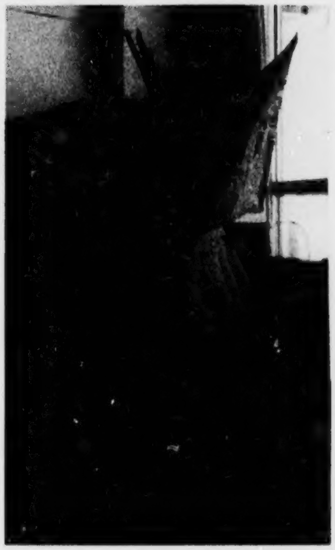
Children begin to recognize diverse family and cultural traditions and the contributions the arts make to these traditions. They share some family traditions and celebrations and recognize that people celebrate special occasions in a variety of ways.

"If all meanings could be adequately expressed by words, the arts of painting and music would not exist."
John Dewey

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

To facilitate and foster creative and cultural expression in Kindergarten:

- allow space and time for creative imagining and freedom of movement
- provide a variety of natural forms, everyday objects and art media for children to interact with
- provide writing/drawing materials and props in all centres to encourage the integration of creative and cultural expression in other learning areas



- encourage alternative use of materials
- provide opportunities for children to create, and to observe and respond to their own and others' creations
- provide opportunities for musical appreciation and use of musical instruments
- encourage movement and dramatic play activities
- ask open-ended questions in all activities; e.g., "what were you thinking about when you made this?"
- provide artifacts, decorations, and other props that reflect a variety of cultures; e.g., saris and kimonos in the dramatic play centre; origami and chinese brushes in the art centre
- share a few words in the first languages of the children in the classroom
- place bilingual and first language books and dictionaries in the classroom library, as well as books written by a wide variety of authors from various cultures
- provide a parent corner that includes a notice board with materials in appropriate home languages
- foster a classroom atmosphere that promotes respect and understanding.

VIGNETTE

"To have ideas is to gather flowers. To think is to weave them into garlands."
Anne-Sophie Swetchine

Children enjoy sharing family stories, traditions and celebrations. They express their thoughts and feelings in many creative ways. The teacher facilitates and extends the sharing of individual children's experiences with other children in the class.

During centre time, the teacher is talking to individual children.

Teacher: Maria, you must be proud you finished all that puzzle. I noticed you have been singing a lovely song all morning. Tell me about it.

Maria: It's about a little girl. Grandpa taught it to me.

Jeremy: Sing it again.

Teacher: What a good idea. Maria, could you sing it again?

(Maria begins to sing her song again as a small group gathers around.)

Teacher: Thank you, Maria. What's the name of your song?

Maria: I don't know but it's from Italy.

Vu: Can we all learn to sing it?

Maria: There are some actions as well.

Teacher: At circle time maybe Maria would teach us her song.

April: Can we get the drum and shakers?

Teacher: Let's try the song first and then decide.

CHAPTER TWO

The Learning Environment

CHAPTER TWO ... AT A GLANCE

This chapter describes the learning environment in the Kindergarten classroom. It includes helpful ideas on:

- establishing the classroom community
- setting up the classroom area
- choosing equipment and materials
- managing learning centres and linking activities to the specific learner expectations of the *Kindergarten Program Statement*
- enriching play in the Kindergarten classroom.

Stories of Practice that connect the content of this chapter with Kindergarten children, teachers and classrooms are included in Appendix B.

Self-reflection that assists teachers in reflecting on their practice and identifying areas for growth is included in Appendix C.

Teacher Ideas that provide practical and useful information and sample forms for classroom use are included in Appendix D.

THE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

Kindergarten programs provide safe, stimulating, functional and comfortable learning environments that invite children to discover, explore, create, experiment and observe. The climate or tone of the kindergarten classroom is developed through the interactions between the teacher, children and other adults.

An atmosphere of trust that enhances children's learning is created by the teacher's:

- responsiveness to the children
- body language; e.g., eye contact, facial expressions
- information conversations; e.g., meeting and greeting children at the classroom door
- modelling of appropriate behaviour.

Establishing a sense of community encourages children to share responsibility for their learning environment and grow in respect for each other.

THE CLASSROOM AREA

Thoughtfully selected and organized equipment, resources and materials support a child-centred program and are flexible enough to meet the daily emerging needs of young children.

> *"It is often thought that, since literacy is such a natural act, a fully "natural" environment is needed. Not so. If the classroom is not carefully designed and structured and continually adapted to meet the shifting social and learning needs of the community, then children's natural urge to express themselves will be thwarted."*
> Donald Graves

Teachers choose equipment and materials and arrange the classroom space to reflect the needs and interests of children and the program expectations, taking into account the following considerations:

- features of the classroom; e.g., door, windows, sink, electrical outlets
- spaces for individual learning, group and class gatherings, expansion of activities
- spaces for teacher materials and children's personal belonging
- placement of learning centres to complement each other and encourage interaction between centres; e.g.,

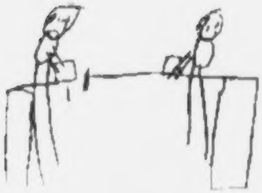
WET

QUIET	art science	water sand cooking	NOISY
	library mathematics writing	blocks carpentry dramatic	

DRY

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

Equipment, materials, and supplies are selected on the basis of their appropriateness to the learning goals of the classroom and of each learning centre. Criteria for selection include program requirements, safety, durability, function and flexibility. Care is taken to select materials that are sensitive to the needs, backgrounds and interests of the children in the program. Resources may be purchased, hand-made or donated from homes and the community. Child-created materials for class displays and bulletin boards are most effective and beneficial; they give children ownership and responsibility for contributing meaningfully to their learning environment. Learning experiences can also be enhanced through the use of available audio-visual equipment, such as overhead and filmstrip projectors, VCRs, cameras and tape recorders.



Alberta Learning authorizes learning and teaching resources for use in the Kindergarten program and for the Kindergarten level of subject areas such as English Language Arts, Mathematics, Physical Education and Health. These resources are available for purchase from the Learning Resources Centre. Information about authorized resources is found on the Alberta Learning web site at <http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca>.

"Good books are true friends."
Francis Bacon

The following considerations help in organizing materials and resources in ways that enable children to make choices, experiment with materials, and explore and express their ideas:

- child-friendly and accessible organization of materials; e.g., plastic tubs, illustrated labels, peg boards, colour/shape coded shelves
- flexibility and ease of movement; e.g., wheeled trolley, shelves and cupboards on castors
- attractive and inviting displays; e.g., previously unnoticed puzzle could be placed on a table, books on construction from the library could be displayed in the wood working centre

LEARNING CENTRES

"Children have real understanding only of that which they invent themselves, and each time that we try to teach them something too quickly, we keep them from reinventing it themselves."
Jean Piaget

Learning Centres help children achieve the learner expectations of the *Kindergarten Program Statement* through hands-on, experience-based activities. They provide an environment that recognizes and supports each child's prior knowledge, skills, attitudes, learning pace, personal traits, interests, goals and preferred learning styles.

Children learn about measurement, science, nutrition and reading as they follow instructions to bake cupcakes to help celebrate a classmate's birthday. They learn about graphing, communications and democratic procedure when they chart suggested names for their new classroom pet and vote on their final selection. As they work collaboratively with others at the woodworking table, they learn about estimation and teamwork and develop gross and fine motor skills. They learn about construction, community planning, perseverance, representation, symmetry and balance as they build towns and buildings at the block centre. They learn the names and sounds of the alphabet letters through writing and reading activities, and learn to recognize and produce numerals and shapes at the mathematics centre.

Planning for instruction using learning centres involves a number of decisions regarding room arrangement, materials and resources. Initially, the teacher sets up centres to capture the interests of the children and get them accustomed to routines and expectations. As the year progresses, the children's needs, classroom themes/projects and program requirements will drive the content and organization of centres. Some learning centres—such as library, blocks and writing—may be available throughout the year. Some are introduced for special projects and interests or at seasonal times. Others may change periodically. The playhouse centre, for example, can be a castle for kings and queens for a week and then become a hospital for doctors and nurses. The water centre can be adapted by adding bubbles, ice, boats, corks or whales.

Some centres lend themselves to a free-flowing interchange of ideas and materials. Children, for example, may use large blocks from the block centre to build furniture in the playhouse. Sometimes, it may be necessary for classes to share equipment for centres like woodworking, cooking and musical instruments. These centres, therefore, may not always be available.

"A kind word is like a spring day."
Russian Proverb

The teacher, and other adults in the classroom support learning by being actively involved with the children. The teacher moves around the classroom, working with individuals and small groups—observing, assessing, and recording individual progress and achievement.

Parents and other volunteers can assist with centres in a variety of ways—from gathering and supplying needed materials to sharing their own specific skills and interests. Their involvement is most effective when they understand the objectives of each centre and how they can best help children. This enables volunteers to help children in ways that benefit their growth, such as showing them how to hold a pair of scissors rather than doing the cutting for them. Parent and volunteers can also document and record children's work by photographing activities and tape recording or scribing specific conversations, stories and explanations.

"The days on which one has been most inquisitive are among the days on which one has been happiest."
Robert Lynd

Learning centres give children the opportunity to explore and discover and take responsibility for selecting and completing a variety of activities. The teacher organizes the work spaces, activities and materials in response to the children's diverse needs, interests and activities, while taking into account the expectations of the *Kindergarten Program Statement*.

Kindergarten classrooms feature a variety of areas for independent and small or large group activities. This accommodates the children's need to be actively involved in a variety of tasks. The following pages describe some of the learning centres that are typically part of Kindergarten classrooms. They provide examples of links from these learning centres to the specific learner expectations in the *Kindergarten Program Statement*. Suggested links are also provided to the Division 1 outcomes of the *Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Program of Studies*.

ART CENTRE

Children express their emotions, ideas and understanding of the world through creating and responding to art. They explore and experiment using a variety of materials and talk about their own and others' art works. Classroom displays of children's art reflect their growing and changing knowledge of their world.

Possible learning experiences:

- painting
- drawing
- sculpting
- illustrating
- print-making
- collages

Suggested materials:

- tables
- easels
- drying space; e.g., racks, clotheslines
- glue
- paste
- tape
- drawing instruments
- string
- staples and stapler
- scissors
- play dough, modelling clay, clay and tools
- painting materials; e.g., tempura, fingerpaint, water colours, brushes, toothbrushes, cotton swabs, rollers
- collage materials; e.g., fabric, string, yarn
- crayons, pastels, chalk, felt markers
- cotton balls and swabs
- tissue paper, crepe paper
- paper; e.g., newsprint, manila, construction, wall paper, cardboard
- picture file and art reproductions

Some ways for parents/volunteers to be involved:

- observing and encouraging children
- providing materials where needed
- encouraging children to wear a paint shirt for "messy" jobs
- setting children's work to the side or in a safe place to dry
- teaching/helping children to clean up
- scribing children's stories about their projects
- teaching specific skills as necessary; e.g., how to mix colours, hold a paint brush
- documenting children's stories, conversations and ideas

LINKS TO THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT

ART CENTRE

English Language Arts

- draws, records or tells about ideas and experiences
- experiments with sounds, colours, print and pictures to express ideas and feelings
- expects print and pictures to have meaning and to be related to each other in texts

Mathematics

- extends and creates a pattern
- builds 3-D objects
- sorts objects using a single attribute
- covers a surface with a variety of objects
- describes and discusses, orally, objects using such words as big, little, like a box, like a can

Community and Environmental Awareness

- begins to participate in problem solving
- recognizes the need to care for materials and uses materials without wasting them
- selects and works with a variety of materials to build structures
- becomes aware of colours, shapes, patterns and textures in the environment
- explores and responds to the design and properties of a variety of natural and manufactured materials and objects

Personal and Social Responsibility

- participates actively in learning tasks
- shows willingness to explore and expand learning and to try new things
- takes some responsibility for selecting and completing learning activities
- works cooperatively with a partner or in a group
- seeks help as needed

Physical Skills and Well-being

- develops fine motor skills
- develops perceptual motor skills
- demonstrates body and space awareness in relation to self and others

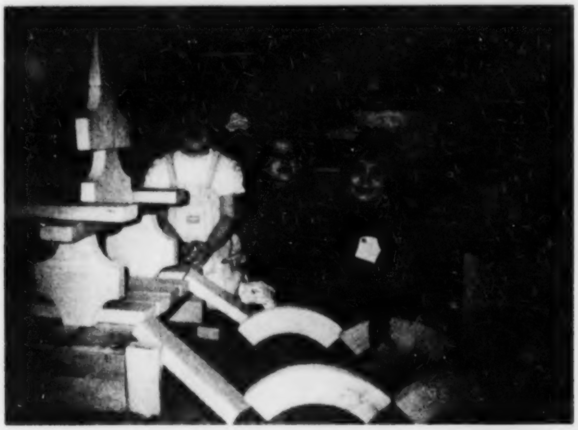
Creative and Cultural Expression

- explores and expresses ideas, perceptions, feelings and thoughts
- responds to and interprets visual images
- experiments with a variety of art materials to create 2-D and 3-D forms
- experiments with line, colour, shape, texture and pattern in diverse media
- begins to discern many objects in daily life are designed or created by artists

Links to the Division 1 Outcomes of the ICT Program of Studies

- P3 1.1 access images, such as clip art, to support communication
- P3 1.2 create visual images by using such tools as paint and draw programs.

BLOCK AND LARGE MANIPULATIVES CENTRE



Children have many opportunities to develop thinking, problem-solving and collaborative skills, as they plan and work individually or with others. Through the exploration of a variety of materials, they develop and refine gross and fine motor skills.

Possible learning experiences:

- exploring a variety of novel uses for materials
- building structures
- building cities and towns
- building towers
- measuring and comparing
- building enclosures

Suggested materials:

- blocks of varying sizes, shapes, and materials:
- low shelving
- carpeting
- planks
- toys and props to enrich block play; e.g., large and small vehicles, multi-ethnic figures, traffic signs, animals, play people, steering wheel
- pictures that depict different types of homes and buildings
- markers and posterboard for sign making
- large empty boxes

Some ways for parents/volunteers to be involved:

- supplementing vocabulary when necessary
- displaying materials for easy selection
- giving adequate time for play and clean up
- helping with decisions to maintain a special structure for an extended period
- initially helping with clean up—later supervising
- providing specific, clearly outlined areas for putting blocks away
- helping reinforce established rules, e.g., taking buildings apart rather than pushing them down, getting permission before taking classmates' structures down, keeping building height lower than their heads
- documenting children's stories, conversations, structures or block play

LINKS TO THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT

BLOCK AND LARGE MANIPULATIVES CENTRE

English Language Arts

- connects related ideas and information
- shares ideas and information about topics of interest
- participates in class and group activities
- listens to the ideas of others

Mathematics

- builds and compares sets of objects
- extends and creates a pattern
- covers a surface with a variety of objects
- arranges objects in order of size, by length or by height
- builds 3-D objects

Community and Environmental Awareness

- selects and works with a variety of materials to build structures
- demonstrates some ways of organizing materials:
  e.g., collecting, arranging, creating, transporting
- generates ideas to make personal sense of objects, events and relationships in the environment
- describes some ways people and goods are transported

Personal and Social Responsibility

- engages in some independent tasks and seeks assistance, as necessary
- works cooperatively with a partner or group
- offers and accepts help in group situations
- takes some responsibility for selecting and completing learning activities
- begins to deal appropriately with frustration

Physical Skills and Well-being

- experiences and develops manipulative skills
- develops fine motor skills
- experiences and develops nonlocomotor skills
- demonstrates body and space awareness in relation to self and others

Creative and Cultural Expression

- uses imagination creatively in dramatic play
- explores a variety of ways to pose and solve problems and complete tasks
- explores and expresses ideas, perceptions, feelings and thoughts in a variety of forms
- explores familiar materials in new ways

COMPUTER CENTRE

Computers contribute to children's learning, offering many possibilities for children to draw, write and publish their work. New technology allows for the inclusion of children with severe disabilities. Appropriate, assisted access to the Internet provides opportunities to connect with people and information from all over the world. The *Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Program of Studies* provides a broad perspective on the nature of technology, how to use and apply a variety of technologies, and the impact of ICT on self and society. The program sets out division level outcomes for learning in technology.

Possible learning experiences:

- reading
- writing and publishing
- drawing
- developing and applying skills

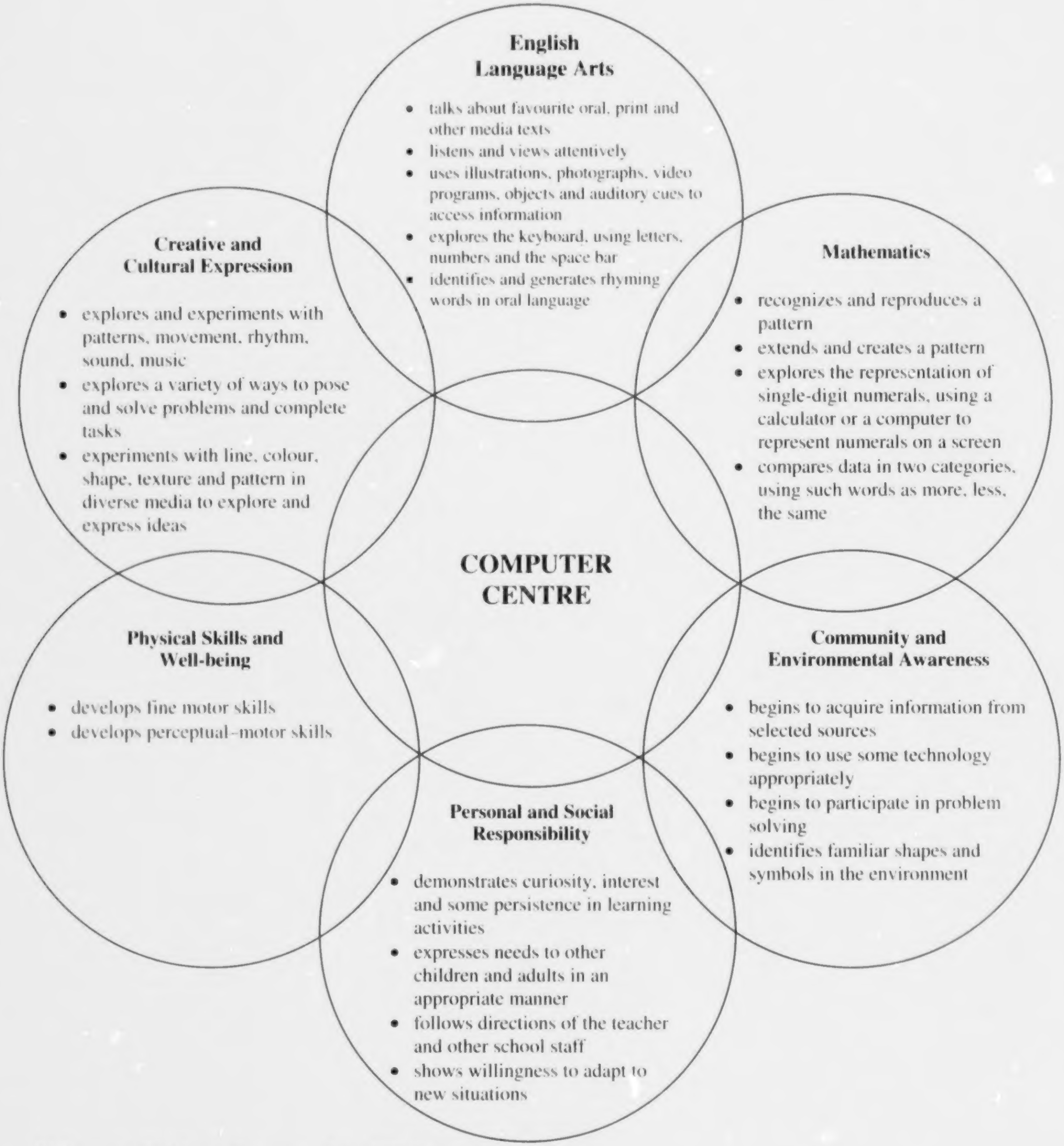
Suggested materials:

- computer
- quality software
- printer

Some ways for parents/volunteers to be involved:

- assisting with proper use of equipment
- helping children explore and further their understanding of available software programs
- helping children with writing/representing their ideas, and publishing
- assisting children in searching for specific information

LINKS TO THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT



English Language Arts

- talks about favourite oral, print and other media texts
- listens and views attentively
- uses illustrations, photographs, video programs, objects and auditory cues to access information
- explores the keyboard, using letters, numbers and the space bar
- identifies and generates rhyming words in oral language

Creative and Cultural Expression

- explores and experiments with patterns, movement, rhythm, sound, music
- explores a variety of ways to pose and solve problems and complete tasks
- experiments with line, colour, shape, texture and pattern in diverse media to explore and express ideas

Mathematics

- recognizes and reproduces a pattern
- extends and creates a pattern
- explores the representation of single-digit numerals, using a calculator or a computer to represent numerals on a screen
- compares data in two categories, using such words as more, less, the same

COMPUTER CENTRE

Physical Skills and Well-being

- develops fine motor skills
- develops perceptual–motor skills

Community and Environmental Awareness

- begins to acquire information from selected sources
- begins to use some technology appropriately
- begins to participate in problem solving
- identifies familiar shapes and symbols in the environment

Personal and Social Responsibility

- demonstrates curiosity, interest and some persistence in learning activities
- expresses needs to other children and adults in an appropriate manner
- follows directions of the teacher and other school staff
- shows willingness to adapt to new situations

Links to the Division 1 Outcomes of the ICT Program of Studies

- F3 1.1 demonstrate courtesy and follow classroom procedures when making appropriate use of computer technologies
- F5 1.1 demonstrate proper posture when using a computer
- F5 1.2 demonstrate safe behaviours when using technology
- F6 1.1 perform some basic computer operations.

COOKING CENTRE

"Kindercooking" programs can take place within classroom settings or other designated areas in the school. Through cooking activities, children learn to read recipes, follow directions and begin to make healthy food choices. They explore and develop understanding of science and mathematics concepts and become aware of different traditions and celebrations.

Safety Notes:

- establish simple safety rules with the children
- provide unbreakable equipment at child-height work areas

Possible learning experiences:

- preparing healthy snacks
- preparing foods for cultural celebrations
- hygiene
- learning to use cooking equipment
- enjoying the preparing and sharing of food

Suggested materials:

- blender
- chopsticks
- cookie sheets
- electric frying pan
- food dehydrator
- grater
- hot plate
- kettle
- measuring cups and spoons
- mixing bowls and spoons
- peelers
- pitchers
- popcorn popper
- pots and pans
- simple recipes; e.g., action picture cards
- teapot
- timer
- toaster oven
- tortilla press
- child-safe utensils
- washable counter tops or tables (at child height)
- wok
- ice cream maker
- bread machine

Some ways for parents/volunteers to be involved:

- helping children read the recipes and follow directions
- assisting children with measuring ingredients
- involving children in the clean-up process
- bringing in specific cooking equipment and materials

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LINKS TO THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT

COOKING CENTRE

English Language Arts

- connects oral language with print and pictures
- makes statements about topics under discussion
- explores texts from various communities
- relates aspects of texts to personal feelings and experiences
- experiences a variety of texts

Mathematics

- uses the words full, empty, less and more, to talk about volume and capacity
- uses words like hot, hotter; cold, colder; warm, warmer; cool, cooler to talk about temperature

Community and Environmental Awareness

- begins to participate in problem solving
- describes some common objects and events
- recognizes the need to care for materials, and uses materials without wasting them
- uses simple tools in a safe and appropriate manner
- describes the function of some common objects

Personal and Social Responsibility

- participates actively in learning tasks
- develops a sense of responsibility for tasks at school
- seeks help as needed
- expresses needs to other children and adults in an appropriate manner

Physical Skills and Well-being

- develops fine motor skills
- makes healthy food choices
- observes safety rules
- recognizes appropriate nutritional habits
- identifies nutritious foods, including snack foods
- identifies and demonstrates positive hygiene and health care habits

Creative and Cultural Expression

- shares some family traditions
- becomes aware of different family and cultural traditions and celebrations
- shows awareness of and pride in own culture
- recognizes that people celebrate special occasions in a variety of ways

DRAMATIC PLAY CENTRE

Children extend their understanding of a theme or topic of interest. They imitate actions of others, role-play real or imagined situations, practise the skills of daily living and manipulate materials in the environment. Teachers can add new items to broaden or develop interests. Children can also be encouraged to add materials from their home and community environments.

Safety Note:

- be aware of the possibility of transference of head lice through sharing of hats and dress-up clothes.

Possible learning experiences:

- role-playing
- creating/using puppets
- expressing themselves through creative movements or dramatic dance
- story telling
- dramatizing something from theme/interest studies

Suggested materials:

- briefcases
- childsize furniture
- clock
- commercial puppets
- curtains
- multi-ethnic dolls and accessories
- multi-ethnic dress-up clothes and props
- full-length mirror
- kitchen and housekeeping supplies
- masks
- material for hand-made puppets; e.g., socks, bags, buttons, yarn, paper, sequins
- typewriter
- newspapers
- paper and writing instruments for shopping lists, telephone messages, etc.
- prop boxes related to current themes or projects; e.g., hospital, restaurant, bank
- puppet theatre—commercial or hand-made
- rocking chair
- scarves, ribbons
- steering wheel
- taped music
- telephone, telephone books
- play money, cash register

Some ways for parents/volunteers to be involved:

- encouraging children to share and cooperate
- helping with use of materials when requested
- supplementing vocabulary when necessary
- initially helping with clean up
- documenting children's stories, conversations and dramatic play

LINKS TO THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT

DRAMATIC PLAY CENTRE

English Language Arts

- talks about ideas, experiences and familiar events
- talks about and represents the actions of characters portrayed in oral, print and other media texts
- makes statements related to the content of own and other's pictures, stories or talk

Creative and Cultural Expression

- explores and expresses ideas, perceptions, feelings and thoughts in a variety of forms
- uses imagination creatively in dramatic play
- becomes aware of different family and cultural traditions and celebrations
- begins to select from familiar media, tools or materials to express thoughts, ideas, feelings, experiences

Mathematics

- uses the terms long time or short time, to talk about the duration of events
- exchanges play money for objects in a play store
- arranges objects in order of size, by length or by height
- uses the words heavier or lighter to talk about the mass/weight of two objects

Physical Skills and Well-being

- shows a willingness to listen to directions and simple explanations
- experiences moving safely and sensitively through all environments
- demonstrates an understanding of basic rules and fair play
- observes safety rules
- identifies and demonstrates positive hygiene and health care habits

Community and Environmental Awareness

- becomes aware that people have and express feelings in similar as well as different ways
- identifies people who work and help in the community
- role plays familiar situations
- describes the function of some common objects found in and around the home and community
- shows awareness of the ways in which people take care of responsibilities

Personal and Social Responsibility

- shows willingness to explore and expand learning and to try new things
- shows willingness to adapt to some new situations
- demonstrates awareness of honesty
- identifies some qualities that contribute to positive family relationships
- recognizes that there are choices about how to express feelings
- shows respect for self

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

Children develop coordinated movement, balance, and stability through games and activities using equipment such as balls, bean bags, and hoops. A centre for an activity for gross motor skill development can be set up in the large group meeting area during classroom centres. As well, children can participate in a variety of activities during gym time in locations like an outdoor area, an empty classroom or the school or community gymnasium.

Possible learning experiences:

- playing cooperative group games
- exploring ways equipment can be used
- catching, throwing, bouncing balls
- climbing
- jumping
- participating in movement activities
- dancing

Suggested materials:

- bean bags
- hoops, wires, targets
- balls of various types, sizes, materials
- various types of racquets, bats, sticks, paddles
- nets
- parachute
- climbing apparatus
- mini-trampoline
- low balance beam
- rocking boats
- slide
- stairs
- scooter board
- individual tumbling mats
- jump ropes
- low agility boxes

Some ways for parents/volunteers to be involved:

- observing and encouraging children
- teaching specific skills as necessary; e.g., jumping, throwing, catching
- assisting with proper use of equipment
- helping reinforce established safety rules
- encouraging and modelling cooperation
- teaching/helping children to put away equipment and materials

LINKS TO THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

English Language Arts

- talks about experiences similar or related to those in texts
- asks and answers questions to determine what the class knows about a topic
- uses appropriate words, phrases and statements with adults and peers when speaking and listening, sharing and taking turns

Mathematics

- describes the relative position of 3-D objects, using such words as over, under, beside, between, inside, outside
- arranges objects in order of size, by length or by height
- uses the words heavier or lighter to talk about the mass/weight of two objects
- recognizes and reproduces a pattern
- extends and creates a pattern

Community and Environmental Awareness

- becomes aware of the relationship between cause and effect
- begins to recognize that there are choices about how to express feelings
- identifies some body parts and describes the function of each
- expresses preferences and identifies likes and dislikes

Personal and Social Responsibility

- learns to express and accept positive messages
- begins to deal with frustration appropriately
- gets to and from destinations within the school
- experiences different roles in a variety of physical activities
- displays a willingness to play alongside others
- identifies and demonstrates etiquette and fair play

Physical Skills and Well-being

- experiences and develops locomotor skills
- experiences educational gymnastics
- experiences and develop nonlocomotor skills
- participates with effort in physical activities
- makes choices to be involved in a variety of movement experiences

Creative and Cultural Expression

- explores and experiments with patterns, movement, rhythm, sound and music
- participates in action songs, singing games and poems
- experiences body awareness during dance activities
- responds to the beat in music through movement and repetitive, rhythmic actions

GROUP MEETING AREA

Children learn to converse through talking, listening, observing, sharing experiences and being part of a large or small group. New concepts, centres and materials are often introduced here. Past learnings or experiences may be recalled and extended, and accomplishments at centres shared with the class. During centre time, some teachers use this area as the library and listening centre or for gross motor skills development.

Possible learning experiences:

- opening and closing activities
- story time and story telling
- shared reading experiences
- class planning and evaluating of activities
- sharing student work and ideas
- participating in whole class activities; e.g., music, movement, dance, brainstorming, chanting, choral speaking
- meeting with special visitors

Suggested materials:

- carpeted space and/or small carpet pieces for each child
- pillows
- chart stand and paper
- flannel board with cut outs
- magnetic board
- chalkboard
- rhythm instruments
- white board
- books
- tape-recorder
- screen
- overhead projector
- pocket charts
- analog and/or digital clock

Some ways for parents/volunteers to be involved:

- modelling appropriate listening behaviours
- contributing to discussions
- participating in songs, finger plays and musical activities
- providing support for individual children as needed

LINKS TO THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT

GROUP MEETING AREA

English Language Arts

- shares personal experiences prompted by texts
- talks and represents to explore, express and share stories, ideas and experiences
- expects print and pictures to have meaning and to be related to each other in print and other media texts
- participates in shared listening, reading and viewing experiences
- identifies favourite stories and books

Mathematics

- extends and creates a pattern using actions
- describes, orally, a pattern
- uses words like hot, hotter; cold, colder; warm, warmer; cool, cooler to talk about temperature
- uses the terms long time or short time, to talk about duration of events
- arranges objects in order of size, by length or by height

Community and Environmental Awareness

- identifies favourite things, and likes and dislikes
- describes some interests, events and experiences
- recognizes changes in weather and some ways people and animals adapt to the seasons
- identifies familiar shapes and symbols
- recognizes familiar places within the community

Personal and Social Responsibility

- knows some personal information and shows awareness of appropriate situations in which to provide it
- identifies some characteristics of a good friend and ways of making friends
- separates from parents/guardians willingly when in familiar and comfortable situations

Physical Skills and Well-being

- recognizes that some household substances may be harmful
- recognizes that hazardous products are labelled with warning symbols
- understands the connections between physical activity and emotional well-being

Creative and Cultural Expression

- participates in action verses, singing games and poems
- explores and experiments with patterns, movement, rhythm, sound, music
- shows awareness of and pride in his or her own culture
- recognizes that people celebrate special occasions in a variety of ways
- shares some family traditions

Links to the Division 1 Outcomes of the ICT Program of Studies

- C1 1.2 process information from more than one source and retell what has been discovered
- F2 1.1 identify technologies used in everyday life.

LIBRARY AND LISTENING CENTRE

This centre offers children an opportunity to enjoy books in a comfortable, well-lit environment. They explore a variety of attractive, quality books that are free of cultural, racial or gender bias. The addition of a listening post at this centre allows children to listen to tapes, read along with books and record their own stories. Books and other reading materials may be available in other parts of the classroom as well.

Possible learning experiences:

- reading/looking through books
- listening and reading along with books and tapes
- listening to music, poems and chants
- recording their own stories and songs, and listening to others' recordings
- drawing in response to music or books on tape

Suggested materials:

- carpet or throw rugs
- floor cushions
- rocking chair, upholstered chair or chesterfield
- reading "boat" or bathtub
- book racks with books, displayed full face
- tape recorders and tape-recorded stories
- books and cassettes in a variety of levels and genres
- magazines
- filmstrips and filmstrip projector
- earphones
- child-made books
- drawing materials
- blank tapes to record own stories
- flannel boards and flannel board stories

Some ways for parents/volunteers to be involved:

- sharing stories with children in an interactive way
- assisting with use of listening devices
- asking questions about the story
- having children make predictions about the story
- listening to children's stories and songs
- documenting children's stories and conversations

LINKS TO THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT

LIBRARY AND LISTENING CENTRE

English Language Arts

- experiments with rhymes and rhythms of language to learn new words
- understands that print and books are organized in predictable ways
- begins to use language prediction skills when stories are read aloud
- begins to identify some individual words in texts that have been read aloud
- develops a sense of story through reading, listening and viewing experiences

Creative and Cultural Expression

- becomes aware of how artists and musicians use such elements as rhythm, melody, line, colour and pattern to express ideas
- responds to and appreciates the art, music, movement and drama of own or other cultures
- becomes aware of why and how ideas are communicated through art, music, movement, drama
- becomes aware of different family and cultural traditions and celebrations

Mathematics

- counts the number of objects in a set (0 to 10)
- describes, orally, a pattern
- classifies and describes linear attributes of objects; e.g., long, short

Physical Skills and Well-being

- develops fine motor skills
- develops perceptual motor skills
- recognizes appropriate nutritional habits
- describes appropriate places for children to play
- describes and observes safety rules

Community and Environmental Awareness

- begins to acquire information from selected sources
- recognizes familiar animals and their characteristics and surroundings
- identifies some personal characteristics that make self both similar to and different from others
- identifies familiar sounds in the environment and community
- recognizes that some activities or events occur at particular times

Personal and Social Responsibility

- follows the rules and routines of familiar environments
- shows respect and demonstrates a positive, caring attitude toward others
- shows willingness to adapt to new situations
- listens to peers and adults

Links to the Division 1 Outcomes of the ICT Program of Studies

- C4 1.1 formulate a plan to complete an inquiry
- C4 1.3 organize information from more than one source
- C7 1.1 develop questions that reflect a personal information need.

MATHEMATICS AND SMALL MANIPULATIVE MATERIALS CENTRE

Children work at their own level through concrete, hands-on experiences. Individually or cooperatively, they use manipulative materials to learn about number, patterns, measurement, quantity, classification, seriation, and data collection and organization.

Possible learning experiences:

- using non-standard measurement tools to record lengths of classroom items
- recording weather and discussing weather patterns
- participating in rhythmic counting games and finger plays
- participating in patterning activities and games

Suggested materials:

- counters
- pegs and boards
- beads and design cards
- trays, egg cartons
- linking cubes
- geometric shape puzzles
- calendars
- sorting materials and containers
- play money
- bread tags
- small bean bags
- clock
- egg timer
- magnets and magnetic board
- foreign coins
- calculators
- graphing mats
- pattern blocks
- beansticks and loose beans
- tangrams
- wooden sticks
- geoboards and rubber bands
- dominoes
- number line
- parquetry blocks
- rods
- paper and writing tools
- puzzles
- small blocks
- building blocks and shapes
- beads
- card games
- cards
- paper and writing tools for labels, signs, number writing
- lacing boards
- balance scales
- tools for measuring

Some ways for parents/volunteers to be involved:

- asking questions to extend learning
- supplementing vocabulary
- documenting children's stories, conversations, structures and activities

LINKS TO THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT

MATHEMATICS AND SMALL MANIPULATIVE MATERIALS CENTRE

English Language Arts

- seeks information from a variety of sources
- expresses interest in new ideas and experiences
- categorizes objects and pictures according to visual similarities and differences
- shares information-gathering experiences
- uses drawings to illustrate ideas and information, and talks about them

Mathematics

- sorts objects using a single attribute
- orders up to two sets of like objects
- describes and discusses, orally, objects
- represents the processes of addition and subtraction through role playing and the use of manipulatives
- classifies and describes linear attributes of objects
- identifies, sorts and classifies 3-D objects in the environment

Community and Environmental Awareness

- explores and investigates objects and events in the classroom
- identifies familiar shapes and symbols in the environment and community
- demonstrates awareness of the properties of objects and events in the environment
- asks questions about objects and events in the environment

Personal and Social Responsibility

- demonstrates curiosity, interest and some persistence in learning activities
- seeks help as needed
- completes some self-directed, self-initiated activities
- learns to express and accept positive messages

Physical Skills and Well-being

- develops fine motor skills
- develops perceptual motor skills

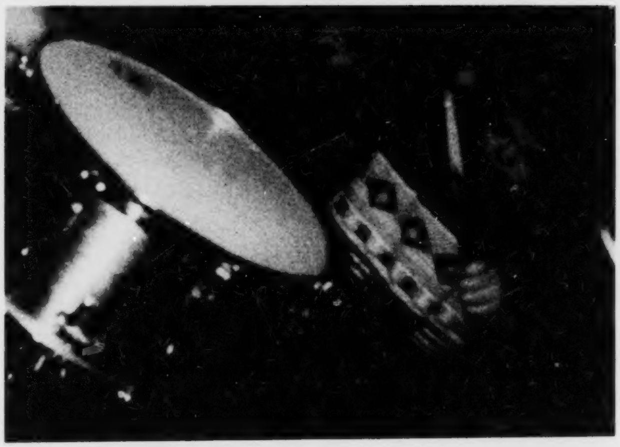
Creative and Cultural Expression

- explores and experiments with patterns, movements, rhythm, sound, music
- explores a variety of ways to pose and solve problems and complete tasks
- explores familiar materials in new ways
- experiments with a variety of art materials to create 2-D and 3-D forms

Links to the Division 1 Outcomes of the ICT Program of Studies

- C4 1.1 formulate new questions as research progresses
- P2 1.1 read information from a prepared database.

MUSIC CENTRE



Children explore and express their feelings, reflections and ideas as they listen to music and respond to it in various ways, such as clapping, singing, dancing and using musical instruments. They can also create their own music and instruments. An effective music centre has ample space for children to move about and a variety of types of music to listen to and instruments to play.

Possible learning experiences:

- learning a variety of children's songs
- creating own songs, chants, rhythmic verses
- developing appreciation for a variety of music
- making simple musical instruments

Suggested materials:

- record player and records
- cassette player and tapes
- earphones
- rhythm instruments; e.g., tambourines, drums, flutes, rhythm sticks, cymbals, sand blocks, triangles, bells, castanets
- piano
- Orff instruments
- homemade instruments
- materials for composing own music and making own instruments
- bottles filled with water
- rattles, shakers
- spoons
- maracas
- streamers and scarves to encourage dancing
- books about composers
- conch shells

Some ways for parents/volunteers to be involved:

- setting phone numbers and life skills to music or a rhythm
- teaching simple songs, chants, finger plays
- encouraging children to create their own music
- helping them make and use instruments
- bringing instruments to class and sharing various musical skills

LINKS TO THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT

MUSIC CENTRE

English Language Arts

- explores personal experiences and family traditions related to texts
- experiments with sounds, words, word patterns, rhyme and rhythms
- appreciates the sounds and rhythms of language
- listens to and recites short poems, songs and rhymes, and engages in word play and action songs

Mathematics

- recognizes and reproduces a pattern, using actions and manipulatives
- extends and creates a pattern, using actions and manipulatives
- describes, orally, a pattern
- builds 3-D objects

Community and Environmental Awareness

- expresses preferences and identifies likes and dislikes
- becomes aware of the five senses and how they are used to explore, investigate and describe the world
- identifies familiar sounds in the environment and community
- becomes aware that people have and express feelings in similar as well as different ways

Personal and Social Responsibility

- follows directions of the teacher and other school staff
- joins in some small and large group games and activities
- perceives self as capable of learning
- expresses personal feelings in appropriate ways

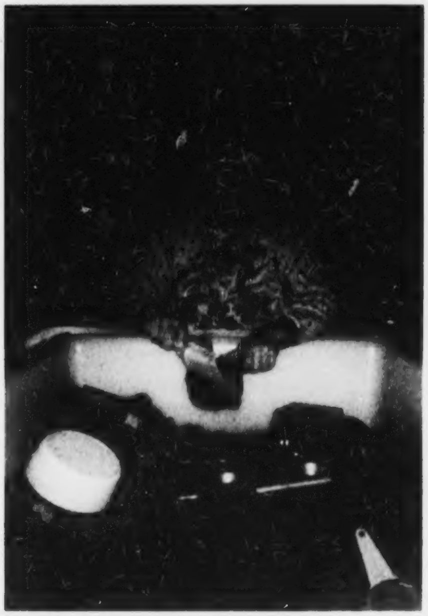
Physical Skills and Well-being

- experiences moving safely and sensitively through all environments
- demonstrates body and space awareness in relation to self and others
- develops perceptual motor skills

Creative and Cultural Expression

- explores and expresses ideas, perceptions, feelings and thoughts in a variety of forms
- responds to the beat of music through movements and repetitive rhythmic actions
- explores and begins to distinguish among the sounds of various musical instruments
- begins to recognize and respond to elements in music
- begins to connect own forms of expression to forms of expression in the world around

SAND CENTRE



Children explore the properties of a variety of materials through observation, measurement, and problem-solving. Theme-related and other imaginative play occurs individually or in groups. Sand can be replaced with other materials such as play pellets and sterilized soil.

Possible learning experiences:

- exploring a variety of possibilities; e.g., wet/dry, tracks, landscapes
- measuring and estimating
- engineering
- excavating
- creating patterns and designs
- weighing

Suggested materials:

- sand table and washed sand
- containers of differing sizes and shapes
- utensils
- scales
- sieves, colanders, sifters
- measuring cups and spoons
- plastic figurines
- combs, forks
- funnels
- rakes
- scoops, shovels, spades
- toy vehicles and equipment
- dust pan and broom
- buckets
- wheelbarrow

Some ways for parents/volunteers to be involved:

- helping reinforce established safety rules with the children
- helping children clean up any spills
- extending learning through questioning
- adding water to the sand, if required

LINKS TO THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT

SAND CENTRE

English Language Arts

- listens to experiences and feelings shared by others
- retell ideas to clarify meaning in response to questions or comments
- makes statements about topics under discussion
- finds ways to be helpful to others

Mathematics

- uses the words heavier or lighter, to talk about the mass (weight) of two objects
- extends and creates a pattern
- describes, orally, a pattern
- uses the words full, empty, less and more, to talk about volume and capacity
- counts the number of objects in a set of 0–10

Community and Environmental Awareness

- uses sand and other manipulatives to explore scientific and aesthetic concepts
- becomes aware of the relationships between cause and effect
- manipulatives or uses materials for a purpose
- becomes aware of the five senses and how they are used to explore, investigate and describe the world

Personal and Social Responsibility

- demonstrates curiosity and some persistence in learning activities
- engages in some independent tasks without continuous adult involvement
- works cooperatively with a partner or group

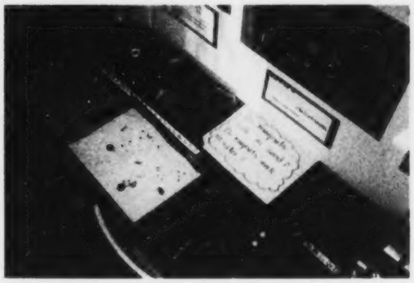
Physical Skills and Well-being

- develops fine motor skills
- develops perceptual–motor skills
- identifies and observes safety rules
- shows a willingness to listen to directions and simple explanations

Creative and Cultural Expression

- explores familiar materials in new ways
- explores a variety of ways to pose and solve problems and complete tasks

SCIENCE AND EXPLORATION CENTRE



Children explore, observe, investigate and classify a variety of objects and materials. The materials include natural, commercial and found ones, and those brought from home to supplement an area of study. Children's natural curiosity and interest in our world leads them to ask questions and make further observations.

Safety Note:

- check if any children have allergies before deciding to have classroom pets or "pet visitors"

Possible learning experiences:

- making rain by placing a cold pie plate in steam
- watching a balloon or an inner tube increase in size
- simulating thunder by blowing up two paper bags and banging them together
- setting up a classroom pond
- keeping a chart of personal growth
- observing life in an aquarium or terrarium
- creating an ant farm
- planting seeds
- exploring artifacts of a particular ethnic group

Suggested materials:

- artifacts, pictures, books of an ethnic or cultural group, filmstrips
- things to feel, smell, hear and observe—use adult supervision for any tasting activities
- seeds and things that grow
- rocks and shells
- plants that grow in different types of soil
- objects of interest brought by children
- old appliances, such as toasters, radios and telephones and appropriate tools for taking them apart and putting back together and appropriate tools
- foreign coins
- rock tumbler
- magnets and iron filings
- magnifying glasses
- batteries and bulbs
- thermometers
- globe
- compass
- pendulum
- prisms
- microscope
- insect collection
- ant farm
- weather vane
- collections of grains, beans and herbs
- incubator

Some ways for parents/volunteers to be involved:

- encouraging children to explore and describe materials
- helping children tidy up
- supplementing vocabulary when necessary
- documenting children's stories, conversations and observations

LINKS TO THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT

SCIENCE AND EXPLORATION CENTRE

English Language Arts

- asks questions and makes comments during listening and reading activities
- attends to texts on topics of interest
- talks and represents to explore, express and share topics, ideas and experiences
- asks questions to satisfy personal curiosity
- follows one- or two-step instructions
- responds to questions about personal contributions to group process

Mathematics

- collects, with assistance, first-hand information
- constructs with assistance, a concrete/object graph, using one-to-one correspondence
- compares data in two categories
- describes the relative position of 3-D objects
- identifies, sorts, and classifies 3-D objects in the environment

Community and Environmental Awareness

- asks questions about objects and events in the environment
- begins to draw conclusions about objects and events under study
- shows awareness of similarities and differences of living things, objects and materials
- becomes aware of the importance of protecting the environment
- describes a variety of homes
- generates ideas to make personal sense of objects, events and relationships

Personal and Social Responsibility

- demonstrates curiosity, interest and some persistence in learning activities
- offers and accepts help in partner or group situations
- shows willingness to explore and expand learning and to try new things
- begins to develop respectful communication skills, appropriate to context

Physical Skills and Well-being

- develops fine motor skills
- identifies and observes safety rules
- develops perceptual motor skills
- recognizes that some household substances may be harmful
- recognizes that hazardous products are labelled with warning symbols

Creative and Cultural Expression

- explores familiar materials in new ways
- explores a variety of ways to pose and solve problems and complete tasks
- begins to discover that many objects in daily life and designed or created by artists
- experiments with line, colour, shape, texture and pattern in diverse media

Links to the Division 1 Outcomes of the ICT Program of Studies

- C5 1.1 share information collected from electronic sources to add to a group book
- F2 1.2 describe particular technologies being used for specific purposes.

WATER CENTRE

Children are given opportunities to learn and practise science and mathematics concepts through water table activities. Individually or with others, they engage in activities such as pouring, mixing and measuring.

Possible learning experiences:

- exploring freely; e.g., dripping, dribbling, shaking, washing, displaying, conveying
- measuring, comparing
- investigating topics, such as:
  - buoyancy
  - plumbing
  - water animals
  - bodies of water; e.g., rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, oceans
- evaporation
- bubbles
- absorbency
- rainy days

Suggested materials:

- water table
- water
- measuring cups and spoons
- straws
- containers that vary according to size, shape, and function, with some that hold the same volume but are shaped differently
- sponges
- water wheel
- sieve
- egg beater
- objects that sink or float
- plastic tubing
- watering can
- food coloring, oil, soap, detergent (use with caution because of possible allergies)
- plastic aprons
- marbles, pebbles for water displacement
- spoons, scoops
- pumps
- eye droppers
- bubble pipes/blowers
- boats and other toys that float
- squeeze bottles
- straws, siphons
- plastic animals, whales, fish

Some ways for parents/volunteers to be involved:

- helping children clean up any spills
- extending children's learning through thoughtful questions
- encouraging children to put things away, as dry as possible, when finished
- encouraging children to wear protective aprons, if available
- documenting children's stories, conversations and activities

LINKS TO THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT

WATER CENTRE

English Language Arts

- makes comments that relate to the topics being discussed
- contributes ideas and answers questions related to experiences and familiar texts
- suggests ways to gather ideas and information
- represents and talks about ideas and information
- shares new learnings with others

Creative and Cultural Expression

- explores familiar materials in new ways
- explores a variety of ways to pose and solve problems and complete tasks

Mathematics

- uses the words, full, empty, less and more to talk about volume and capacity
- uses words like hot, hotter; cold, colder; warm, warmer; cool, cooler to talk about temperature
- sorts objects using a single attribute

Physical Skills and Well-being

- develops fine motor skills
- develops perceptual–motor skills
- demonstrates body and space awareness, in relation to self and others
- identifies and demonstrates positive hygiene and health-care habits

Community and Environmental Awareness

- becomes aware of the relationship between cause and effect
- uses water and other manipulatives to explore scientific concepts
- manipulates or uses materials for a purpose
- becomes aware of the five senses and how they are used to explore, investigate and describe the world

Personal and Social Responsibility

- engages in some independent tasks and seeks assistance, as necessary
- becomes aware of the needs of others and individual similarities and differences
- offers and accepts help in partner or group situations
- learns to express and accept positive messages

WOODWORKING CENTRE

Children select and work with a variety of materials using simple tools that are sturdy, authentic and in good condition. They may produce a finished product or simply explore possibilities with the tools and materials.

Safety Notes:

- teach safety procedures, including the use of safety goggles
- ensure activities are carried out under adult supervision
- limit the number of children using the centre
- provide safe storage for tools
- teach safe use of tools
- avoid woods to which children may be allergic

Possible learning experiences:

- constructing; e.g., props to support imaginative play, toys, inventions
- experimenting with materials
- assembling and disassembling appliances

Suggested materials:

- workbench
- vise/clamps
- safety goggles
- tools of appropriate size and weight; e.g., hammers, nails, screws, saws, screwdrivers, pliers, levels
- wood scraps—often available free from lumber yards
- sand paper in a variety of textures
- work hats and aprons
- bins to store wood scraps
- wood glue
- string
- cardboard
- broom handles/dowelling, wheels
- toothpicks
- ruler and metre stick
- storage space such as shelving or peg boards
- wooden wheels
- paint and brushes
- tree stumps for nail pounding

Some ways for parents/volunteers to be involved:

- donating materials where needed
- demonstrating and teaching skills
- encouraging safe and proper use of tools
- observing, encouraging and questioning
- teaching/helping children clean up
- documenting children's stories, conversations, activities and products

LINKS TO THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT

WOODWORKING CENTRE

English Language Arts

- expresses interest in new ideas and experiences
- makes statements about topics under discussion
- asks questions to make sense of information
- speaks in a clear voice to share ideas and information
- explores and experiments with new words and terms associated with topics of interest

Mathematics

- builds 3-D objects
- uses the words heavier or lighter to talk about mass/weight of two objects
- describes the relative position of 3-D objects

Community and Environmental Awareness

- manipulates or uses materials for a purpose
- recognizes the need to care for materials, and uses materials without wasting them
- selects and works with a variety of materials to build structures
- uses simple tools in a safe and appropriate manner

Personal and Social Responsibility

- participates actively in learning tasks
- completes some self-directed, self-initiated activities
- follows directions of the teacher and other school staff
- begins to deal appropriately with frustration
- expresses needs to other children and adults in an appropriate manner

Physical Skills and Well-being

- develops fine motor skills
- identifies and observes safety rules
- develops perceptual–motor skills
- demonstrates body and space awareness in relation to self and others

Creative and Cultural Expression

- explores some familiar materials in new ways
- explores a variety of ways to pose and solve problems and complete tasks
- experiments with a variety of art materials to create 2-D and 3-D forms
- begins to select from familiar tools, media or materials to express thoughts, ideas, feelings, experiences

WRITING AND DRAWING CENTRE

As children explore different ways of communicating, they begin to understand the relationship between speech and print. They use a variety of materials to explore and express their ideas through drawing and writing.

Possible learning experiences:

- class or group writing experiences/shared writing
- exploring and experimenting with a variety of drawing and writing materials
- writing notes or cards to family, friends and community members
- making books
- preparing signs, labels, directions and instructions
- keeping journals and notebooks

Suggested materials:

- table and chairs
- paper of different shapes, sizes, colours and textures
- blank booklets of different shapes and sizes
- pencils, pens, quills, markers, crayons, pencil crayons (colours should match a variety of skin tones)
- alphabet models; e.g., magnetic letters, templates, stencils, alphabet cards
- pictionaries/dictionaries
- small chalkboards and chalk
- stationary and envelopes
- index cards for word banks
- picture file and art reproductions
- writing folders
- typewriters
- publishing materials; e.g., scissors, tape, hole puncher, yarn, paper clips, stapler
- envelopes
- key rings
- pocket chart
- computer and printer
- sign language cards
- stamps and stamp pad
- sentence strips

Some ways for parents/volunteers to be involved:

- observing and encouraging children
- scribing a dictated story and listening while the child "reads" it back
- asking questions that extend children's learning
- encouraging writing and drawing behaviours in response to children's needs and interests
- assisting in proper use of writing and drawing tools
- documenting children's stories, ideas and activities

LINKS TO THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT

WRITING AND DRAWING CENTRE

English Language Arts

- talks about own reading and writing experiences
- demonstrates curiosity about visual features of letters and words with personal significance
- talks about and explains the meaning of own pictures and print
- forms recognizable letters
- develops a sense of sentence
- capitalizes first letter of own name

Creative and Cultural Expression

- begins to connect own forms of expression to forms of expression in the world around
- explores and expresses ideas, perceptions, feelings and thoughts in a variety of forms
- experiments with line, colour, shape, texture, pattern in diverse media
- shares some family traditions

Mathematics

- collects, with assistance, first-hand information
- recognizes and reproduces a pattern
- constructs, with assistance, a concrete/object graph

Physical Skills and Well-being

- develops fine motor skills
- develops perceptual motor skills
- recognizes that hazardous products are labelled with warning symbols
- recognizes improvement in physical abilities
- describes appropriate places for children to play

Community and Environmental Awareness

- expresses preferences and identifies likes and dislikes
- describes some interests, events and experiences
- identifies some personal characteristics that make self both similar to and different from others
- recognizes familiar animals and their characteristics and surroundings

Personal and Social Responsibility

- perceives self as capable of learning
- develops a sense of responsibility for tasks at school
- completes some self-directed, self-initiated activities
- begins to develop respectful communication skills appropriate to context
- recognizes that there are choices about how to express feelings

Links to the Division 1 Outcomes of the ICT Program of Studies

- P1 1.1 create original text, using software
- P6 1.1 compose a message that can be sent through communication technology.

PLAY IN THE KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM

Young children see the world differently than older students and adults, and they learn best through direct, sensory experience. They need to manipulate, explore and experiment with real objects. They learn by doing, moving and talking.

> *"Know you what it is to be a child? It is to believe in love … to believe in loveliness; to believe in belief; it is to turn pumpkins into coaches and mice into horses, lowness into loftiness and nothing into everything."*
> Percy Bysshe Shelley

Young children are naturally curious and eager to learn. They are active learners who learn through a variety of means. Purposeful play is an important way that children learn. Educators and psychologists refer to play as the serious work of childhood. Children at play are highly motivated and capable of intense concentration.

As children play, they are clarifying information, integrating ideas from previous experiences, and exploring and experimenting with their environment. Play give children opportunities to add to their knowledge, learn new skills and practise familiar ones. Through play, children learn to deal with their feelings, interact with others and resolve conflicts. They develop their imagination, creativity and ability to solve problems.

> *"Many of the things we need can wait. The children cannot. Right now is the time bones are being formed, blood is being made, and senses are being developed. To them we cannot answer 'Tomorrow.' Their name is 'Today.'"*
> Gabriela Mistral

Play is a valuable and important way for children to learn. It provides them with the opportunity for active, self-directed learning. Children experience and refine skills and abilities that will be used later in more formal study.

Through play, children can:

- experiment
- communicate
- pretend
- create
- explore
- socialize
- problem solve
- plan
- imitate
- practise
- think
- discover.

"All rising to a great place is by a winding stair."
Francis Bacon

However, not all play behaviours promote optimal development. It takes purposeful teacher planning and involvement in the play to ensure that it does not become non-productive, destructive or disruptive. When teachers and classroom volunteers act as facilitators during play, they provide a positive impact on the type and level of play and on the amount of learning that takes place.

JUST PLAYING

When I'm building in the block room,
Please don't say, "I'm *just playing*."
For, you see, I'm learning as I play
About balance, I may be an architect someday.

When I'm getting all dressed up,
Setting the table, caring for the babies,
Don't get the idea I'm "just playing."
I may be a mother or a father someday.

When you see me engrossed in a puzzle
or some "playing" at my school,
Please don't feel the time is wasted in "play."
For you see, I'm learning as I play.
I just might be a teacher someday.

When you see me learning to
skip, hop, run and move my body,
Please don't say, "I'm *just playing*."
For, you see, I'm learning as I play.
I'm learning how my body works.
I may be a doctor, nurse or athlete someday.

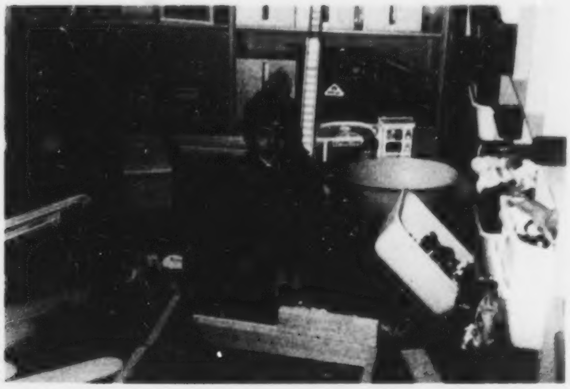
When you ask me what I've done at school today,
And I say, "I *just played*."
Please don't misunderstand me.
For, you see, I'm learning as I play.
I'm learning to enjoy and be successful in my work.
I'm preparing for tomorrow.
Today, I AM A CHILD AND MY WORK IS PLAY.

Author Unknown

ENRICHING PLAY IN THE LEARNING AREAS

Types of Play

Play can be quiet and solitary or active and social. It is usually described in terms of the following four types.



Solitary Play

Involves a child:

- playing alone and independently, using different materials and having no interaction with others
- simply observing others
- using pretend playmates or materials.

Parallel Play

Involves children:

- using similar materials but simply playing alongside each other with little or no interaction
- offering suggestions or questions but refraining from entering the play of others.

Associative Play

Involves children:

- sharing common material and/or activities while playing together in an unorganized manner.

Cooperative Play

Involves children:

- engaged in activities together that are organized and purposeful.

The following pages provide examples of play in the six learning areas, along with teacher responses that enhance and extend children's learning.

> *"Life is creative. It plays itself into existence, seeking out new relationships, new capacities, new traits. As it tinkers with discovery, it creates more and more possibilities."*
> Margaret Wheatley
> and Myron Kellner-Royers

ENRICHING PLAY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Examples of Play	Possible Teacher Response
Solitary Play	
• A child is writing and representing in his journal.	• "Can you tell me about your work?"
• A child picks up the telephone in the house area and says "Hello, hello! Can you come home for supper? It's ready now!"	• Join in the drama to encourage language development, e.g., "What's for supper, Mom? I'm really hungry!"
Parallel Play	
• A child is writing on an invoice pad and another child asks where she got it. The second child gets another invoice pad and begins to write on it.	• Stimulate imaginative involvement through conversation and common purpose. "It looks like you are both doing important work. Tell me about it."
• One child selects a small chalkboard and chalk to begin writing play; another child does the same.	• Observe, or participate by taking a chalkboard yourself and write letters of different sizes.
Associative Play	
• A child has started to stamp letters in a random pattern on a piece of paper; a friend asks if he can stamp too.	• Ensure that the friend has paper. Comment on a pattern if there is one—like "d,d,d". Sing "a,b,c,d,..." as a prompt to look for letters in order or by names.
• An oversized book with pictures of animals is open on the floor and two children are both looking at the pictures.	• Observe. Sit with children and talk about some of the photos, e.g., "Look at the colours on the wings! Oh, the antennae looks really fuzzy." Encourage children to talk about the pictures too.
Cooperative Play	
• The children are playing hospital in the transformed dramatic play centre. Realistic dress-up clothes, medical materials, and writing material are available. The children are using the clothes and medical supplies, but don't seem to know how to use the writing materials.	• Join the play in role as an "Admitting Personnel" to model how to use the writing materials. Enter the hospital and make an ADMITTING name tag. Take a seat by the writing table. Chart information from incoming patients; e.g., name, medical history, age, height, weight. Give them a wristband with their name and birth date, and the date. Lead them to a doctor, saying, "Doctor, this is … (patient's name) and here is the chart for you to write down the diagnosis. We have to keep good records of our patients!" Play until you can encourage a child to take over the admitting role.

ENRICHING PLAY IN MATHEMATICS

Examples of Play	Possible Teacher Response
Solitary Play	
• A child has selected the jewel jar and has taken a handful out to look at them closely. She sets them down on the table after examining them.	• Bring a sorting tray over to the table and suggest that the child put the jewels in the sorting tray after she looks at them. Observe and comment, "Maybe we could put ones that are the same together. Which ones do you think could go together?"
• At the woodworking bench, a child has started to play with the measuring tape, snapping it in and out, lining it up by pieces of wood and laying it on the floor. He is able to hold the tape at one end to start measuring.	• Observe. Join child, bringing something to measure. Help by holding one end of the tape at end of object. Fumble at holding the end of the tape. Encourage the child to assist and explain to you how to proceed with measuring.
Parallel Play	
• Two children are playing in the block corner, sitting back to back. One child has the dinosaur tub and has taken out all the stegosaurus figures. The other child has the wild animal tub and has selected the elephant figures. Both children are placing their figures in a line.	• Observe. Join the children, saying something like, "Thump, thump, thump; the animals in a row. March them up and march them down. March them to the other town … I wonder if those elephants are planning to march over to the stegosaurus town. Maybe they want to meet each other." Encourage children to interact with each other, using the dinosaur and stegosaurus figures.
Associative Play	
• Measuring cups and containers are in the wet sand. Two children are filling the same sized margarine containers—one using a small cup, the other, a larger cup.	• Bring in a large container to "make a cake" and ask the two children to help you cook. Say you need each of them to put in one full margarine container. Ask them to guess how many scoops from each of their cups it would take to fill up the margarine container. Ask "Who will have to work the hardest? Why? Let's try it."
Cooperative Play	
• Children are pretending to serve dinner for a party, using blocks and other manipulatives. They are trying to ensure everyone has the same amount of everything.	• Observe. Help children think of alternatives; e.g., using small block if another apple is needed. Encourage problem-solving skills.
• The children have decided to make a store in the block corner and have filled some containers with small manipulatives as their products. Children are coming up to buy things but different prices are being quoted.	• Observe. If no one suggests price tags, ask, "I wonder what people in the store use so customers know what the prices are? How could we show how much these pieces cost? Where could we find the materials to make some price tags?"

ENRICHING PLAY IN COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Examples of Play	Possible Teacher Response
Solitary Play • A child is standing by the seashell display, picking up one shell at a time, holding it to her ear and listening intently.	• Observe. Ask the child if she can hear anything and to explain what she is hearing. Suggest making a sign to tell others what she learned. Perhaps she could categorize the shells by those that make sounds and those that don't.
• At the water table, a child is experimenting with blowing and sucking air from clear tubing onto the water. He watches the water rise in the tube as he sucks in air. He gets a pail, sucks air from the tube again and quickly bends the tube into the pail. He is so excited when water drains down the tube and into the pail.	• Join in the child's enthusiasm, inviting him to tell you about his discovery. Ask, "What did you do first? Why did you put this end of the tube here? How do you stop the water?" Introduce the term "siphon" and ask him to show the group how to siphon water.
Parallel play • Two children are watching the chicks in the cage. One has put her finger through the bars of the cage, and the other is tapping on the bars.	• Join the two children and ask questions like, "Which chick do you like the best? Why? What does it feel like when the chick pecks at your finger?" Begin a wondering and discovery process by asking, "What would happen if the chick had teeth?" Suggest writing a story together about an imaginary chick like this.
Associative Play • Three children each have a fish head, tray, implements and gloves. Each has explored, prodded, and begun to look inside the fish head.	• Observe. Ask questions to guide exploration and discovery; e.g., "What can you see on the fish head? What is inside? What does it feel like? How can you get behind the bone?"
Cooperative Play • Several children are playing with cars at the block centre. One of the car wheels breaks off.	• Observe their reactions. Ask questions; e.g., "How can we fix this broken wheel? What tools might we need? Where could we go? Who could help us? Would it cost much to fix?" Extend the learning with a field trip to a full-service garage. Then create an automotive interest centre with items such as flexible dryer venting, tools, tires, oil cans, car ramp, rags, overalls, hats, invoices, calculator, photographs of cars.
• A tub of magnets and magnetic chips, materials, and balls are near by. There are several children sharing discoveries with each other and taking turns to try new objects.	• Observe and take notes. Ask questions to guide thinking; "How is that different from the other balls? I wonder why one material works but not the other?"

ENRICHING PLAY IN PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Examples of Play	Possible Teacher Response
Solitary Play • A child is at the paint easel and has begun to paint on the easel without a paper.	• Observe. Comment, "I wonder if you've forgotten anything here. What size paper are you thinking of using for your painting? How could we clean this off to get it ready for your paper? Would you like to use a sponge or a cloth?"
Parallel Play • Two children are working with play dough. One is trying to get the garlic press working; the other is flattening fuzzy hair play dough with the rolling pin.	• Observe. Ask the second child, "What tool did you use to make that fuzzy hair? Please show us how it works … I wonder, are there other ways to make hair?"
Associative Play • One child is in the hospital having surgery and the class has decided to make get-well cards. Paints, stamps, stickers, paper, and markers have been set out. Three children have begun to make separate cards and each one wanted to use the special crinkle scissors. A conflict has broken out.	• Observe. Intervene, saying "It seems we have a problem here. Can anybody tell me what it is? How many scissors? How many children? How can we solve the problem? What ideas do you have?"
Cooperative Play • Children are working to empty the contents of the pumpkins so that they can carve them. One child has started to cry.	• Observe,. Comment, "It seems that we have a problem here. Who can tell me what it is? Oh, someone doesn't want to touch the gooey pulp." To the child, "Let's take a look at this pumpkin. The outside is orange and has a smooth feel; do you like to touch that part? On the top, there's a twisty, hard stem; can you touch that part? Inside is the food and seeds of the pumpkin. The thick part on the inside is what we use to make pumpkin pies, cakes and muffins. The pumpkin is hard right now, but it gets soft when we cook it. Let's see about this other material inside the pumpkin … oh, what are these white pieces? Yes, seeds. What holds the seeds in the middle of the pumpkin? Oh, these threads. Can you touch the seeds? What about the threads? Oh, this is the part that makes you feel sick. This is a big problem for you." To the group, "How can we solve this problem?" Encourage a solution, like an offer to take the seeds away from the pulp thread for the child. Then say, "This is a wonderful way to work together!"

ENRICHING PLAY IN PHYSICAL SKILLS AND WELL-BEING

Examples of Play	Possible Teacher Response
Solitary Play • A child has taken a plastic pail and turned it upside down and has started to tap on it.	• Observe. If he begins to use a rhythm, echo it back. Listen for another and echo back. Introduce your own rhythm for him to echo.
• A child is about to run outside for recess with his shoes on the wrong feet and untied.	• Ask, "How do your shoes feel? Try changing feet … Is it safe to leave your shoelaces undone? What might happen if they're not tied? Have you tried to tie them? Maybe a friend can help."
• A child calls out from the coat area, "Teacher, I can't do my zipper."	• Comment, "Show me what you've tried. Oh, I have an idea. Make this part the mouse, here's his house. Put the mouse in his house and zip him up the hill. You try."
Parallel Play • The class is in the gym playing with balls. One child is running with the ball and crashes into another child. Both fall and start to cry.	• Ask, "What happened? Are you hurt? Let's sit on the bench until you feel better. Why do you think you bumped into each other? What will you do differently next time?"
• Two children are sitting at the art centre working with glue, scissors and paper. One child is trying to cut but is having difficulty and rips the paper in frustration.	• Observe. Comment, "You seem to be having trouble with the scissors. Let me look at them." Hand them back, checking that the child was using his dominant hand to cut. Remind him, "Which way is your thumb pointing? Remember, thumbs up!"
Associative Play • Some children are preparing their snack by spreading cheese on crackers. Crackers are breaking for some children, and other children are holding the knife in a fist grasp. One child can't get cheese from the jar.	• Observe. Comment, "I notice that some of the crackers are breaking. Why is that? See how Sam is holding his knife and cracker while spreading the cheese… Perhaps you could try holding the knife like a spoon to get the cheese out. Do you think holding the jar might help?"
Cooperative Play • Three children are taking turns with a long skipping rope. Another child is standing nearby, watching them.	• Comment, "You children are taking turns so well. Is there a chance that Bobbi could join in?"
• The class is walking over to their adopted tree, and lying at the base of it is a discarded needle. One child runs toward it to pick it up.	• "Stop! That is not safe! What should we do when we see a needle anywhere? Right, walk away and tell a grown-up."

ENRICHING PLAY IN CREATIVE AND CULTURAL EXPRESSION

Examples of Play	Possible Teacher Response
Solitary Play • A child is trying on a special dress in the dramatic play centre and is having difficulty.	• Observe. Comment, "Are you having some difficulty? Let's look at the picture over here to give us some clues to help us."
Parallel Play • Children are painting to music and responding in individual ways. One particular child has started swaying back and forth, and his paintbrush is flowing with the tempo of the music.	• Observe and annotate responses/behaviours of selected children. When the music has finished, as children how the music affected their painting. Say "Kevin, I noticed your paintbrush was keeping time with the music. How did the music make you feel?"
Associative Play • Children are creating hats for the Chinese New Year Celebration. Some children have fully decorated theirs with gold paper and glitter. Others do a quick line design and declare that they are finished.	• Observe. Comment to the ones who have finished quickly, "Have you thought about using glitter? Is there something you could do in this space?" If a child is satisfied that work on the hat is completed, accept that too.
Cooperative Play • Several children are playing in the house centre. They are selecting their babies to dress up. One child says, "Oh we don't want this boy baby here" and throws it over the house wall. Another one says, "I want the girl baby." • Several children are playing in the block centre and are creating a roadway system and want to make a stop sign. They have come to the teacher asking for materials. • The sand/water table is an ocean setting with water over a sand base. Plastic sea animals and boats, coral and shells are available. Four children are playing with sea creatures in the coral. The dolphins begin an undersea dialogue, "We're swimming by the coral to look at all the little fishies." The starfish answer, "Here we are." Then the shark chimes in, "I'm swimming over there now." …	• Observe. Go to the boy baby, saying, "Poor baby; I hope you're all right. You must feel lonely here, all by yourself. Someone will take care of you." Say to the group, "I found this baby in the street. Will somebody take care of him?" Notice the girl baby and pick it up. "Oh, you sweet little baby, you need some clothes. Let's see what we can find for you to wear. I have found a new friend for you." • Respond by asking, "Where can you find an example of what a stop sign looks like?" "Where can you find those materials?" "What do you think you need to make one?" • Ask the children "What will the dolphin and the fish do now the shark is coming over?" Why do the fish want to hide from the shark? Where could they hide? Are there good hiding places in the coral? Could we move the coral to make better hiding places?

CHAPTER THREE

Planning for Instruction and Assessment

PLANNING FOR INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

CHAPTER THREE ... AT A GLANCE

This chapter provides assistance in planning and implementing a Kindergarten program and in assessing, evaluating and reporting on children's learning. Practical information includes:

- organizing for instruction, scheduling and use of time
- long-range, short-range and daily planning
- descriptions of some useful instructional strategies
- purposes of effective assessment, evaluation and reporting
- assessment strategies
- evaluation strategies
- reporting to parents
- themes, projects and in-depth studies
- planning for the transition from home to school and the beginning of the Kindergarten year
- planning for special activities.

Stories of Practice that connect the content of this chapter with Kindergarten children, teachers and classrooms are included in Appendix B.

Self-reflection that assists teachers in reflecting on their practice and identifying areas of growth is included in Appendix C.

Teacher Ideas that provide practical and useful information and sample forms for classroom use are included in Appendix D.

ORGANIZING FOR INSTRUCTION

A Kindergarten program provides children with connected learning experiences emphasizing both processes and products that are authentic and reflect children's understanding. Purposeful learning activities are planned with general and specific learner expectations and the children's individual interests and learning needs in mind.

Themes, projects and/or in-depth studies are valuable learning experiences that integrate the six learning areas in the *Kindergarten Program Statement.* Classrooms are usually organized around projects and centres, and children are encouraged to investigate ideas or materials through interaction. Days are not planned around defined times for language arts, mathematics and other curricular areas. However, children move through a variety of interrelated activities that incorporate the knowledge and skills of all learning areas. Programming is designed to meet the individual needs, interests and developmental levels of the children. Instructional plans are reviewed and modified on an ongoing basis.

SCHEDULING AND USE OF TIME

Routines and schedules need to be established to give children a sense of security, yet they need to be flexible enough to allow for unexpected learning experiences. The decisions and choices made about routines are based on beliefs about learning and how it is best facilitated in the classroom.

When planning for learning, consider:

- the *Kindergarten Program Statement* and a balance of learning areas over a sustained period of time
- children's stages of development
- special needs of children
- pre-scheduled blocks of time; e.g., library, music, physical education, kitchen/staffroom for cooking activities
- materials and equipment available in the classroom
- integrated studies; e.g., themes, projects
- a balance of activities; e.g., large group, small group, individual and less active, more active
- time for whole-class instruction
- volunteer participation; e.g., parents, work experience students
- time to reflect on new learnings, questions, wonders, feelings, future directions
- opportunities for teacher observation.

Sample Half-Day Kindergarten Plans

Arrival Activities:	quiet activities, opening routine, planning for the day
Group Time:	integrated curriculum content OR inquiry or language experience activities
Centre Time:	self-selected activities
Snack:	conversation encouraged
Group Time:	physical activities OR creative, artistic, cultural activities
Closing Activities:	evaluation of the day, gathering materials, outside play

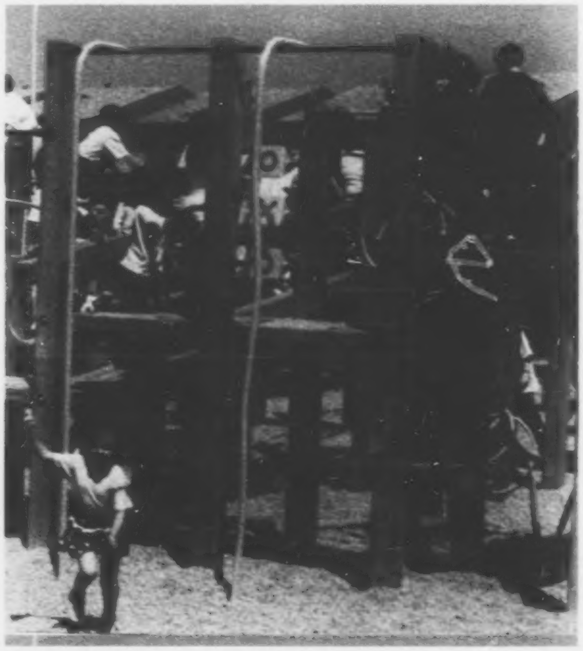
8:45–9:00 (12:45–1:00)	Children arrive, hang up coats and choose a book
9:00–915 (1:00–1:15)	Opening Activities; e.g., attendance, calendar, message
9:15–10:15 (1:15–2:15)	Centre Activities
10:15–10:30 (2:15–2:30)	Recess
10:30–10:45 (2:30–2:45)	Snack
10:45–11:05 (2:45–3:05)	Physical Activities, Music or Stories
11:05–11:10 (3:05–3:30)	Reflection Time Preparation for home

Sample Full-Day Kindergarten Plans

Arrival Activities:	announcements, opening routines
Group Time:	class meeting
Snack	
Centre Time:	self-selected activities
Lunch and Outdoor Play	
Rest and Quiet Time Activities	
Sharing Time	
Music, Creative Movement	
Recess	
Story	
Closing Activities:	preparation to leave and outside play

9:00 - 9:15	Opening activities and planning and discussion of day's events
9:15 - 11:00	Learning Centres
11:00 - 11:20	Storytelling
11:20 - 11:30	Preparation for lunch
11:30 - 12:00	Lunch
12:00 - 12:30	Play outdoors or indoors as weather permits
12:30 - 1:30	Quiet time: e.g., rest, story time, quiet games, books, listening to tapes
1:30 - 3:00	Activity Time: music, projects, physical education, library, presentations
3:00 - 3:15	The day in review and dismissal

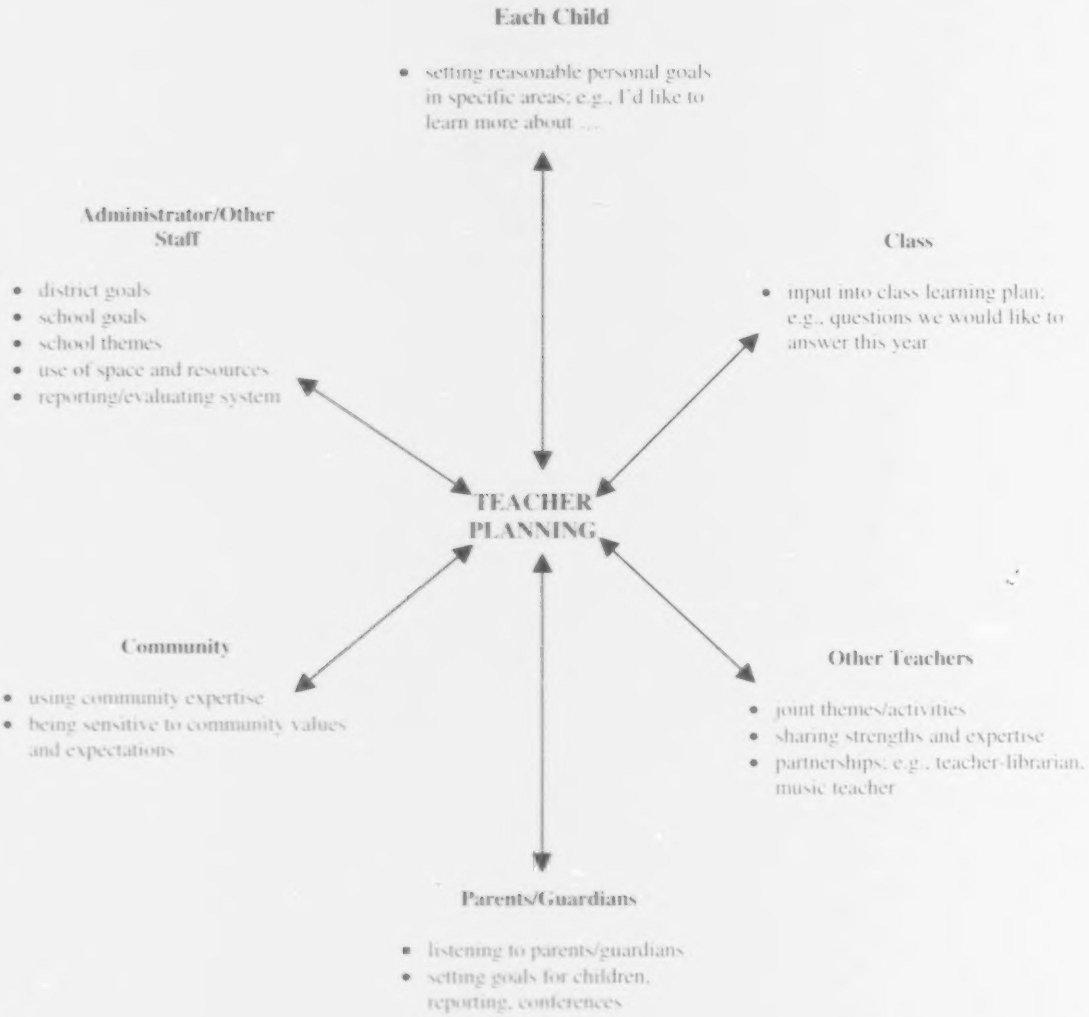
NOTE: Snacks available as individual children need them.



PROGRAM PLANNING

"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."
William Butler Yeats

Planning is a process that involves setting goals and making choices. Teachers develop and record plans in individual ways. Planning integrates the learner expectations of the *Kindergarten Program Statement* with the needs, interests and backgrounds of the children and the available resources in the school and community. Planning is most effective when it involves all the partners in learning—children, families, teaching assistants and other school staff and community members. This enables richer and more varied plans to evolve.



Each Child

- setting reasonable personal goals in specific areas; e.g., I'd like to learn more about …

Administrator/Other Staff

- district goals
- school goals
- school themes
- use of space and resources
- reporting/evaluating system

Class

- input into class learning plan; e.g., questions we would like to answer this year

TEACHER PLANNING

Community

- using community expertise
- being sensitive to community values and expectations

Other Teachers

- joint themes/activities
- sharing strengths and expertise
- partnerships; e.g., teacher-librarian, music teacher

Parents/Guardians

- listening to parents/guardians
- setting goals for children, reporting, conferences

LONG-RANGE PLANS

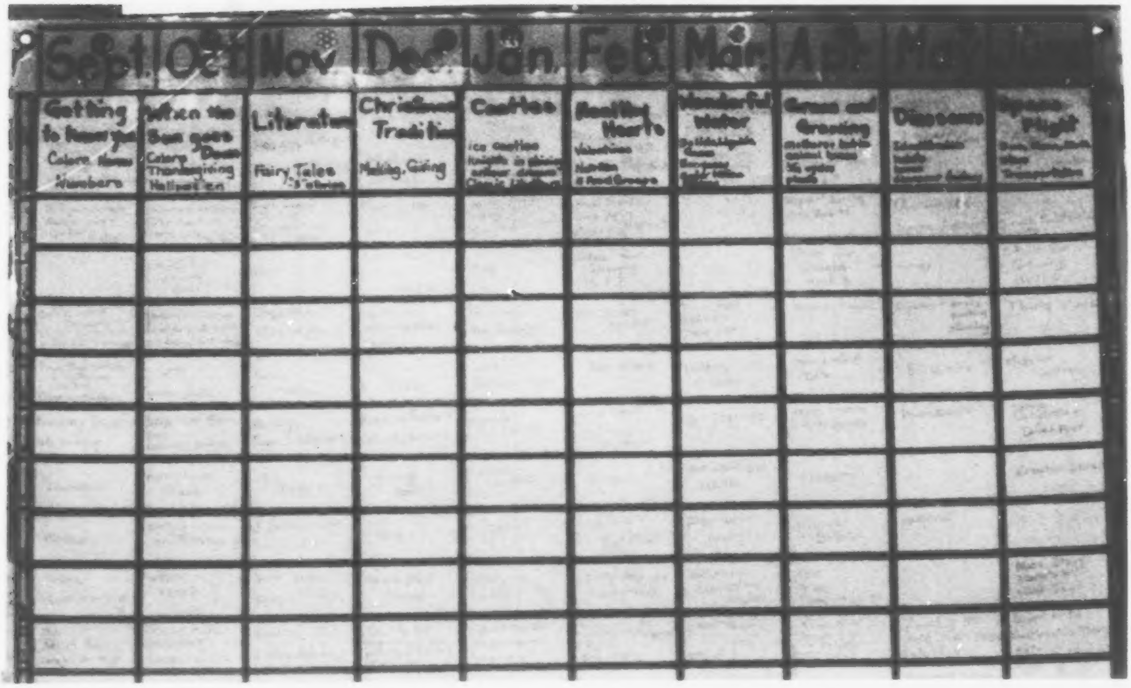
> *"We must begin where the child is. There is nowhere else we can start."*
> John Dewey

Long-range plans capture the vision of possibilities for the year. They summarize intentions and options and provide both a foundation and reference point for organizing instruction.

The school calendar with its opening and closing dates, holiday breaks, reporting periods and special program or event dates—skating, open house, family night—are taken into account when developing long-range plans. School-wide goals and themes also influence the content and timing in plans.

Long-range plans provide a broad outline of topics for the year. These topics may be based on possible interests of children, natural links between topics, a year-long big idea that is concept-based, seasonal appropriateness or community influences.

Long-range plans begin to map out a plan for integrating the six learning areas of the *Kindergarten Program Statement*.



USING THE *KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT* IN LONG-RANGE PLANNING

There are as many ways to plan a Kindergarten program as there are teachers. However, there is a basic commonality—the program plan is based on the teachers' knowledge of the *Kindergarten Program Statement* and the Kindergarten children. Steps 1, 2 and 3 in the chart below outline a process that can form the foundation upon which to build program plans.

Step 1 Become familiar with the *Kindergarten Program Statement* before you plan.

↕

First: explore the rationale and principles.	Second: look at the general learner expectations as broad statements of learning for the year.	Third: use the general and specific learner expectations to begin planning.

↕

Step 2 Find out about your Kindergarten children before you develop long-range and short-range plans for the year.

↕

Plan initial activities which allow you to observe, assess, analyze and diagnose children's interests, needs, strengths and abilities. Dialogue with parents and other caregivers of the children.

↕

Step 3 Make planning choices. Integrate what you know about the children with the learner expectations in the *Kindergarten Program Statement*.

↕

Choose a format for planning	Choose: • organizational structures • learner expectations • content/resources • teaching strategies • assessment and evaluation strategies.	Plot your choices on a timeline.

SHORT-RANGE PLANS

Short-range plans elaborate, expand and refine the initial vision for the year.

Detailed outlines of themes, projects or in-depth studies link the learner expectations with topics and activities. Ideas for new learning centres or for new materials and activities in existing learning centres are included in the plan. Learning strategies to engage and sustain children's interests along with materials, resources, speakers and field trips are identified. Specific assessment strategies that are part of an ongoing evaluation plan are integrated.

BASIC COMPONENTS OF SHORT-RANGE PLANS

> *"If teaching is to be an art, we must draw from all we know, feel and believe in order to create something beautiful. To teach well, we do not need more techniques and strategies as much as we need a vision of what is essential. It is not the number of good ideas that turns work into art but the selection, balance and design of those ideas."*
>
> Lucy McCormick Calkins

Organization for Learning

- What organizational structure (e.g., theme, project, in-depth study) works best for this particular topic or concept?
- How will this structure accommodate the learning needs and interests of all children?

Learner Expectations

- Which general and specific learner expectations will be addressed within the context of this structure?
- How will learner expectations accommodate and support children's learning at various levels?
- Will technology outcomes be included?

Content/Resources

- What background and context might need to be built?
- Is there a variety of materials available to meet the range of interests and learning styles of the children?

Timelines

- How long will the activities and projects require?
- What deadlines need to be kept in mind?
- What other school/district activities might impact on this plan?
- How can accommodations be made for children needing enrichment or support?

NATURE
BIRDS

Strategies/Activities

- What introductory activities will engage children?
- What activities will sustain engagement?
- Do children have opportunities to work in large groups? In small groups? On their own? With children from other classes?
- Which strategies/skills will be emphasized, taught, modelled, practiced and reinforced?
- What will provide closure for this section?

Assessment and Evaluation

- How will children's learning be assessed and evaluated?
- How will children have opportunities for self-evaluation and reflection?
- How will the effectiveness of this plan for a theme, project or in-depth study be evaluated?

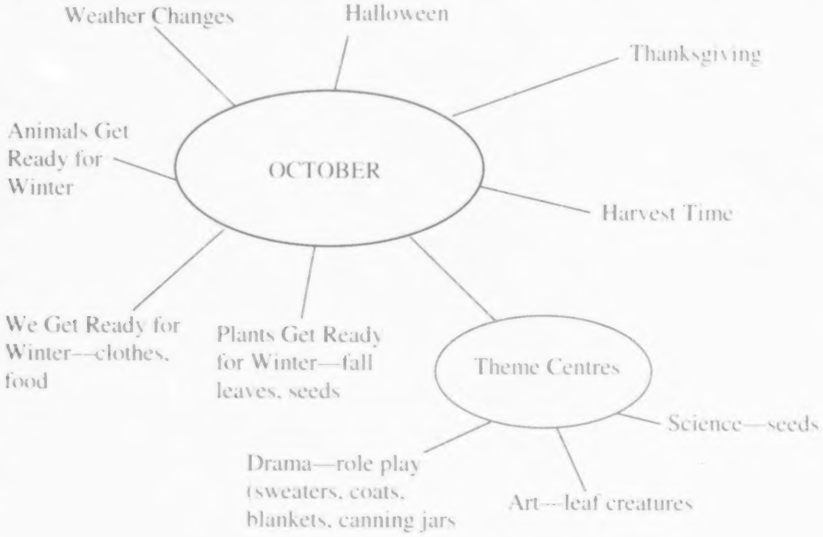
PLANNING FORMATS

There are many formats that can be used in planning, and teachers often try out different ones. Teachers choose the ones that work best for them in their classroom and with their class. Descriptions of some common planning formats follow.

SEMANTIC MAPPING/WEBBING

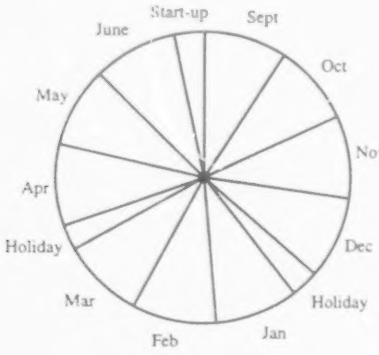
> *"The root of the word education is e-ducere, literally, to lead forth, or to bring something out which is potentially present."*
> Erich Fromm

Semantic mapping involves selecting a central concept around which related ideas are grouped, connected and expanded. It can be used for both long- and short-range planning, with the latter being more detailed and specific.

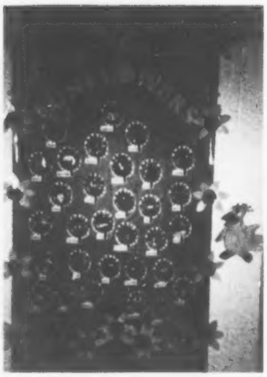

OCTOBER
Weather Changes
Halloween
Thanksgiving
Animals Get Ready for Winter
Harvest Time
We Get Ready for Winter—clothes, food
Plants Get Ready for Winter—fall leaves, seeds
Theme Centres
Science—seeds
Drama—role play (sweaters, coats, blankets, canning jars
Art—leaf creatures

CIRCLE FORMAT

A circle format can also be used for planning the year. Special events, holidays, seasonal events, and school themes can be included.


Start-up
Sept
Oct
Nov
Dec
Holiday
Jan
Feb
Mar
Holiday
Apr
May
June

CHARTS



Charts help you to summarize ideas so that information is available at a glance.

Long Range Plans

September	
October	
November	
December	
January	
February	
March	
April	
May	
June	

"Achievement is a we thing, not a me thing, always the product of many heads and hands."
J. Atkinson

Theme/Unit/Project: _____________ Timeline: __________

Focus:

Activity and Purposes	**Resources**	**Learner Expectations**	**Evaluation Strategies**

DAILY PLANS

Daily plans emerge from short-range plans. They are flexible and can be adapted to meet children's immediate needs and interests. Daily planning includes consideration of classroom routines, such as group meeting, snack time and story time and school scheduling of activities like gym and library.

Daily plans identify specific activities or possibilities for the day within an often flexible timeframe. A notes section is often part of a daily plan and may include proposed parent/volunteer activities, materials, preparation reminders, notes/newsletters to be sent home or meetings.

Teachers often keep contingency plans available for use by substitute/supply teachers, along with pertinent information about individual children and routines.

Daily planning:

- grows out of the short-range plan
- is based on the immediate needs of the children in your class
- includes consideration of classroom routines
- allows for opportunities for observation.

DONT PICK THE FLOWERS

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

"Making mental connections is our most crucial learning tool, the essence of human intelligence: to forge links; to go beyond the given; to see patterns, relationship, context."
Marilyn Ferguson

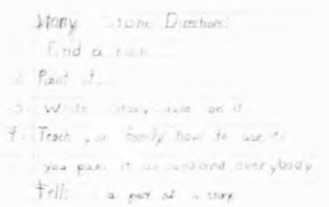
To help children achieve the learner expectations of the *Kindergarten Program Statement*, teachers use strategies and activities that meet their individual learning needs, interests and abilities.

No one teaching method can meet the needs and learning styles of all children at any given time. The Kindergarten teacher closely observes children and classroom events to identify strategies and activities that will be most effective with individual children and that encourage them to interact with others, explore ideas and materials and make choices.

When choosing instructional strategies and activities, it is important to consider what is known about children's learning in areas such as brain development, learning styles, multiple intelligences, and the role of play in young children's learning.

Keeping a list of strategies currently used and ones to learn more about, and try in the classroom can be helpful; e.g.,

Strategies I currently use	Strategies to learn and try
Author's Chair	Brainstorming
Buddy/Cross Age	KWHL
Cooperative Learning	Metacognition
Environmental Print	Modelling
Genre Study	Notebooks
Journal Writing	Scaffolding
Mini-lessons	Shared Reading
Portfolio Assessment	Venn Diagrams
Publishing	Other?
Role-play	
Storytelling	

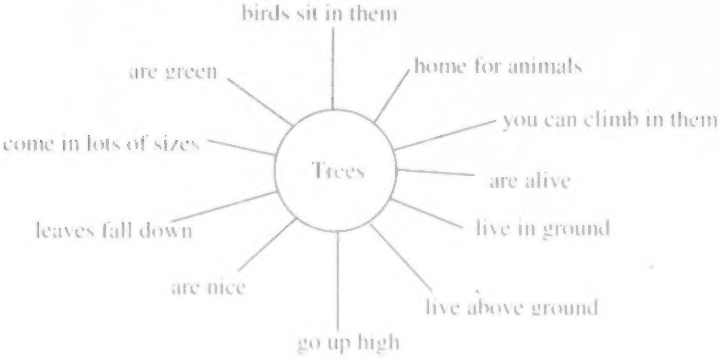

Story Stone Directions
Find a rock
2. Paint it.
3. Write story [illegible] on it.
4. Teach your family how to use it.
you pass it [illegible] everybody
Tell [illegible] a part of [illegible] story

Descriptions and examples of strategies in the second column follow.

BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming involves the use of free association to generate ideas about a specific topic, issue or problem. Children are encouraged to access prior knowledge and create a free flow of ideas about a particular topic. As they call out these ideas, words and phrases, the teacher records all their responses in a non-judgemental way. Brainstorming provides children with an opportunity to develop interest in the topic because it gives them initial ownership of it. The teacher has an opportunity to build on what children already know and can do with language and what they already know about a topic.

Example: In group time, children are responding to the teacher who wonders aloud what they know about trees. The teacher records every response.



K–W–H–L

> *"Thinking is not only intentional, it is also necessarily fraught with the roots that it embodies. It has a from–to structure."*
> Michael Polanyi

A graphic organizer, such as a K–W–H–L chart helps children organize thoughts, ideas and information in a meaningful manner. It can be used before beginning a new theme, project or study or in response to a question. Providing opportunities for children to share what they already know about a given topic helps teachers plan for future teaching experiences.

Example:

What do we already **K**now about the topic?	What do we **W**ant to find out about the topic?	**H**ow will we find out about the topic?	What have we **L**earned about the topic?

METACOGNITION

Metacognition refers to children developing a conscious awareness of their own thinking and learning processes and of the skills and strategies needed to complete learning tasks successfully. Developing metacognition is one of the keys to children becoming lifelong independent learners. During the Kindergarten day, children are encouraged to talk and represent/write about their own learning and engage in self-reflection and goal setting. Opportunities to problem solve and make decisions enable children to choose strategies and monitor their effectiveness. Teacher modelling helps children develop metacognitive skills.

Example: During story time the children are reading a pattern story written on sentence strips in a pocket chart. The teacher points to the text as the children read together. As the teacher comes to a predictable word, one child calls out the correct word. The teacher stops and says, "Yes, the word is …. How did you know?" After the child responds the teacher asks if other children used different strategies to determine the word. Later in another pattern story, the teacher can draw upon these responses to encourage children to predict and recognize new words.

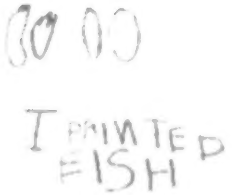
MODELLING

Children learn most social behaviours by observing someone who models appropriate behaviour. The effects of modelling are enhanced if the behaviour is presented clearly, repeated frequently and if several models of the same behaviour are presented. In the classroom, modelling can be presented in several forms; e.g., teacher as model, children or puppets as models; models in stories and books; and models in technology, such as audio and video. Teachers are often primary role models. They have daily opportunities to demonstrate behaviours and to verbalize the thinking processes used to solve common, everyday problems.

Example: The teacher speaks her thoughts aloud, saying, "I have a problem. Recess is in 5 minutes, but we have not started cleaning up yet. What should I do? We could forget about recess and just continue our activity, or we could clean up very quickly and still make it outside for the last half of recess. I'll ask the children what they want to do."

NOTEBOOKS

Children are encouraged to carry self-selected and self-designed notebooks throughout the day so they can make notes whenever ideas occur to them. Entries can be in a variety of formats; e.g., word lists, scribbles and other stages of writing, charts, pictures. Children can share and discuss what they have recorded in their notebooks. Their entries may serve as a source for story writing.



Example: A child takes his notebook to the Discovery Centre and observes the organisms in the pond water. He draws pictures of his observations and uses the bulletin board display to help with words he wishes to write. He later shares his entry with the teacher who encourages him to turn his entry into a story. The teacher scribes the child's story. In circle time, the child and several classmates role play the story.

SCAFFOLDING

The term "scaffolding" refers to the changing levels of support that a teacher or other skilled tutor offers a child to assist in the building of competencies. The level of support or assistance is adjusted as necessary. When a child approaches a task for the first time, more adult assurance and collaboration is needed. As the child gains confidence and competence, the level of assistance decreases thereby encouraging independence and mastery of a task.

Example: A child with little computer experience is trying to use a classroom software program.

Child:	It's not working.
Adult:	What button might you press to turn the computer on?
Child	This one. (Presses button and waits for main menu.)
Adult:	You did it. Now we can see the game. How do we start it?
Child:	I don't know.
Adult:	What does this green dot on the key mean?
Child:	Oh! It means "go!" (Presses button and begins to play the matching game as the adult watches.)

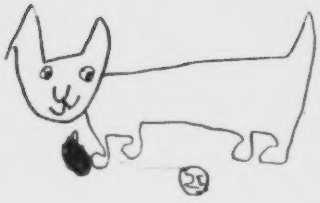
SHARED READING

"Children are made readers on the laps of their parents."
Emilie Buchwald

Shared reading involves small groups or the entire class reading a class-written or teacher/child selected "big book", chart (poem) or pocket chart. Children become familiar with the intonation, pauses, voice inflection and vocabulary to be found in rhythmic, predictable print. Repetition encourages familiarity and comfort with reading aloud. Through the joy of shared reading, children gain reading skills and vocabulary.

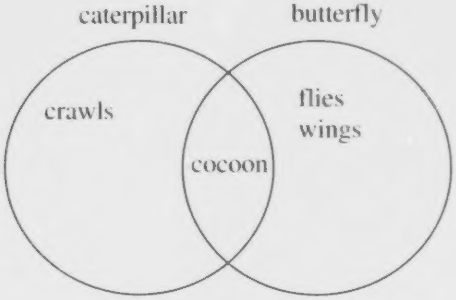
Example: A child stands beside the flip chart, pointing to each word as the children read a patterned poem about friends. The chart is surrounded by self-portraits of each class member. Children have the word "friends" circled in red crayon each time it appears in the chart.

VENN DIAGRAM



A Venn diagram involves the use of two or more overlapping circles. The parts of the circle that do not intersect describe differing or unique qualities while the intersected parts represent common or shared attributes. Use of a Venn diagram in a class discussion is an effective visual way for children to see similarities and differences.

Example:



PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION AND REPORTING

Assessment and evaluation are natural, integral, ongoing and important parts of daily learning. Adults gain information about children's levels of skill and understanding by questioning and talking to them, listening to the language they use and observing their behaviour.

"What all good teachers have in common … is that they set high standards for their children and do not settle for anything less."
Marva Collins

Children demonstrate their learning in appropriate practical ways in an encouraging and supportive environment. They show their disposition for learning through their curiosity and persistence in learning activities, their ability to adapt to new situations, and their contribution to group activities. The teacher looks not only at the children's work but also at the skills and strategies that children use. By observing children many times in different situations, the teacher is better able to build a more complete assessment of their learning.

Throughout the Kindergarten year, the teacher will assess, evaluate and report on children's learning and progress in relation to the expectations for the six learning areas in the *Kindergarten Program Statement*.

> *"We can begin by observing children, learning with them and from them as they learn with us and from us. In this way we can create philosophical and theoretical frames for our observations of the learning environments we make for one another."*
> Denny Taylor

Information that the teacher gathers about each child is used in several ways. This information helps the teacher plan the learning environment and match learning activities to learning needs. The teacher is able to provide ongoing feedback to children to help them recognize what they know and are able to do, and to focus their efforts on more challenging activities.

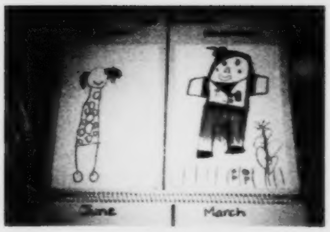
Through oral or written reports, parent evenings, classroom visits and conferences, teachers and parents can exchange ideas and information, and parents can learn more about their children's progress and achievements. In some Kindergarten programs, the child participates in conferences with the parents and teacher. This experience allows children to reflect on and celebrate their learning and set future goals.

Assessment, evaluation and reporting are interrelated and work together to inform teachers, children and parents about the child's progress and program. Effective assessment, evaluation and reporting includes input from all partners in learning.

EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION AND REPORTING

Assessment, evaluation and reporting practices have a close and demonstrable link to instructional practices in the Kindergarten classroom and are consistent with the ideas about children and learning described in the rationale and principles of the *Kindergarten Program Statement*.

Assessment involves gathering information and evidence about what children can do, such as collecting data or work samples, or recording observations. This is an ongoing process that should be used routinely each day. Teachers assess learning and make planning decisions based on daily observations, anecdotal notes and interactions with children.



Evaluation is the process of summarizing and valuing, making of judgements and decisions based on the interpretation of evidence gathered through assessment. Evaluation reflects children's level of development and achievement. Self evaluation is an important aspect for teachers and children.

Reporting occurs when the information collected about children is synthesized, interpreted and communicated, along with evaluative judgements. A variety of reporting formats can be used as long as clear communication and a better understanding of children's abilities and needs are the ultimate goal.

"Evaluation is part of curriculum: it cannot be divorced from classroom organization, from the relationship between teachers and students, from continuous learning experiences and activities. To think about and plan for evaluation, it is necessary to keep in mind the classroom community and its organization. There is no way to separate the role of evaluation from the dynamic teaching/learning transaction."
Yetta Goodman

Assessment, evaluation and reporting practices are most helpful when they:

- relate children's progress and achievement to the learner expectations of the *Kindergarten Program Statement*
- support learning by identifying and matching learning needs to instructional activities
- involve children in setting goals and talking about their learning
- include a variety of strategies for gathering and evaluating information about each child
- facilitate communication with children, parents and other appropriate partners in learning
- assist with planning and decision making
- assist teachers in reflecting on practice and examining beliefs and values.

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

"Bring with you a heart that watches and receives."
William Wordsworth

ANECDOTAL RECORDS

An anecdotal record is a dated written account briefly describing an occurrence, a behaviour or an interaction. This form of recorded observation focuses on what a child can do and allows teachers to have an ongoing collection of documented events. When collected over time, these records provide a total picture of individual children that can assist in planning for individualized instruction.

CHECKLISTS

Checklists provide efficient and helpful ways of gathering information on a child's development. Teachers or other observers place dates, checkmarks and/or notes next to specific skills, behaviours or concepts. Teachers can use checklists found in many resource materials or they can create ones to meet their own needs.

CHILD SELF-REFLECTION

Young children can be encouraged to reflect on their learning. They can set personal goals on their own or in partnership with their teacher or parents. Children benefit from being given the opportunity to learn the language of self-assessment through oral discussion and teacher modelling. A trusting relationship between teacher and child will also enhance the child's disposition and ability to reflect on learning. Self-reflection or assessment improves learning and provides valuable insights into other assessment strategies, such as journals and portfolios. Self-reflection formats may include informal comments, scribed notes, checklists or drawings.

CONVERSATIONS

A conversation with an individual child can allow a teacher to gain insight into the child's interests, strengths, characteristics, progress and learning needs. Conversations can also be held with small groups of children to help shape their learning or foster cooperation and collaboration. Dated notes about the conversations can be kept in a binder, record book or in the children's files.

OBSERVATIONS

To observe is to take notice or to watch carefully. Watching a child in action is an important way of coming to know and understand that individual. Focused observation aids in planning for children who may need special assistance, attention, or extra stimulation. It provides a way of gathering information that may not picked up through conversations. Information gained through observation helps in communicating about the children with their families or other caregivers. Through observing children, teachers often become aware of their own thoughts, reactions, feelings and effectiveness with children. This helps teachers grow in self-awareness.

"The most extraordinary benefit of assessment is that we are given the gift of our children. They are there always, of course, but it's easy not to see what they are showing us.... Each teacher must, in his or her own way, develop strategies for really seeing what it is our students do.... It's not enough to teach our hearts out and hope our students are growing. Assessment allows us to have a 'minds-on' approach to all our teaching."
Lucy McCormick Calkins

PORTFOLIOS

A portfolio is a purposeful, organized collection of materials/artifacts from a child's classroom activities. Such items as artwork, journals, samples of work, tape recordings or photographs are included to provide a meaningful picture of the child's progress throughout the year. The pieces are selected over time by the child and teacher and tell a story of what the child is learning and how that learning is taking place. Each selected sample is dated and many include a brief explanation as to the reason for inclusion; e.g., This is my favourite picture because ...; This sample represents Sam's first attempt at copying text. In order to have enough materials to choose from, it is important to keep a large number of artifacts at school or take photographs of special ones sent home.

A portfolio serves to document the knowledge, skills and attitudes a child has developed over the Kindergarten year. It also contributes to the child's self-esteem by providing a self portrait of the child as learner.

Portfolio assessment can be time consuming but very informative and worthwhile. It is important when setting up a portfolio program to consider:

- the age of the child
- the audience
- the range of samples
- the format; e.g., binder, file folder, scrapbook
- the involvement of child, parent, peers, teacher
- the time needed to insert samples, teacher review and reflection and student sharing and celebrating.

An effective portfolio not only reflects the goals of the *Kindergarten Program Statement* but also the unique interests and abilities of each child. No two portfolios will look the same.

RUBRICS

A rubric is a scale that identifies things of importance and lists the criteria that will be used to evaluate a child's products or performances. Rubrics are assessment tools that increase the consistency of evaluation and provide clear targets for instruction.

SCREENING

Screening is often conducted at community health clinics. It is used to assess a child's speech, language, vision, hearing, conceptual and motor development

TESTS

A standardized test is a series of tasks or questions that follow a prescriptive administration and scoring format and is designed to measure a child's performance. When, and if, used they need to be interpreted in context with information gathered in other ways.

EVALUATION STRATEGIES

> *"We must constantly remember that the ultimate purpose of evaluation is to enable students to become self-evaluating."*
> Arthur Z. Costa

Evaluation is the making of judgements and decisions based on the information gathered through assessments. Evaluation reflects the child's achievements and also the success of teaching strategies.

DIAGNOSTIC

Information provided by diagnostic evaluation is used to determine a child's program and level of understanding. It may also be used for anecdotal reporting.

Diagnostic evaluation occurs at the beginning of the theme, project or year to assess a child's skills and knowledge. It is informal and continual and often used particularly where there is evidence a child is struggling.

"Ultimately, evaluation should be a celebration. Joint evaluation with the children more clearly gives us cause to celebrate. We take risks. We achieve objectives. We rejoice together."
Donald Graves

FORMATIVE

Formative evaluation provides continuous information about the child and helps the teacher plan and modify the program. It can help focus the efforts of the teacher and child.

This type of evaluation is ongoing throughout the year, with the purpose of improving teaching and learning.

SUMMATIVE

Summative evaluation encourages teacher reflection and program evaluation. It is used with formative evaluation to determine a child's achievement and also forms part of the evaluation of a child's achievement that is used for reporting.

Summative evaluation takes place at the end of a period of time, theme or project.

REPORTING CHILDREN'S LEARNING TO PARENTS

REPORT CARDS

Throughout the Kindergarten year, the teacher will observe and record children's learning and progress in relation to the expectations for the six learning areas in the *Kindergarten Program Statement*. At certain times throughout the year the teacher will evaluate and gather this information into reports that can be shared with parents. These reports reflect the needs of the child and parents and the requirements of school authorities.

The intent is to maintain the ongoing communication between home and school, by providing written and/or oral feedback to parents so that they might learn more about their child's progress and achievements.

Formats for written reports vary and may be developed by individual teachers or as a school or authority-wide project. At the Kindergarten level report cards are often combinations of the following:

- anecdotal notes that record observations about children's accomplishments in the six learning areas

- checklists related to the six learning areas that are updated three or four times a year
- observation forms related to specific activities
- portfolios that include children's self reflection based on representing ideas or completing sentence frames
- self reflection forms that indicate likes, dislikes, "want tos"
- rubric scales/scoring criteria for learning centres that are updated three or four times a year.

Whatever the reporting format, the main criteria is that parents be given information about what their child knows and can do in relation to the *Kindergarten Program Statement*, and how their child is progressing.

"Perhaps the best and most important part of parent involvement is the genuine sharing of responsibility for the children's growth and learning. As parents share your joys and concerns about their children's growth, you make them co-creators of learning in school as well as at home, and in the process you learn a great deal that helps you become a better teacher."
Anne Forester
and Margaret Reinhard

CONFERENCES

Conferences provide opportunities to exchange information about a child while working to strengthen relationships between the home and the school. The child's interests are always kept at the forefront of a conference. Conferences have traditionally been held between the teacher and the parent(s). Involving the child in a conference places the focus directly on the child's growth and learning needs.

Parent–Teacher Conferences

The traditional type of conference is between the teacher and the parent(s) to discuss the progress of the child, issues, questions or concerns. The child may or may not be present.

Child–Parent–Teacher Conferences

Child–parent–teacher, or three-way, conferences provide an opportunity for the sharing of information and discussion from the point of view for each participant. These conferences may be held throughout the school year depending on the needs of the child, the parent(s), or the teacher.

Child-led Conferences

In child-led conferences the child leads his/her parent(s) through a specific agenda that highlights the child's growth and learning during the time prior to the reporting period. The child is the centre of the demonstration of learning, actively participating with his/her parent(s) in a variety of experiences that reflect his/her school day.

THEMES, PROJECTS AND IN-DEPTH STUDIES

Themes, projects, and in-depth studies are organizational structures that give children time and opportunity to explore and experiment with ideas, learn new concepts and connect new learning to previous understandings and experiences.

THEMES

> *"One does not discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time ..."*
> Andre Gide

Themes are developed in response to the needs and interests of the children and to meet the learner expectations of the *Kindergarten Program Statement*. They provide a framework within which to structure learning activities for a period of time.

Themes are chosen, and emerge through interactions among children and teacher. They may be as broad-based as Light, Fairy Tales, Homes, Structures, or Beginnings. They may be as specific as Snow, Pets, Hospital, or Trees. Themes can be based on children's immediate life experiences. They may also emerge from children's ideas or imaginative thoughts and from external sources or stimuli. They provide teachers with ways to unify learning experiences for children. Throughout the theme, teachers assume responsibility for helping children make connections and for extending it into various areas of learning.

PROJECTS

Projects tend to be more generative in nature. They are planned and evaluated in negotiation with children and they provide opportunities for the extensive study of topics. The work is child-directed with careful and purposeful adult guidance.

Like many good stories, projects have a beginning, a middle and an end. The beginning may feel somewhat chaotic as the teacher and children explore areas of interest, determine topics and discover what the children already know and what they are interested in discovering. Next, the children engage in their investigations in a variety of ways. Here, the teacher acts as a facilitator; providing resources and opportunities for field work, suggesting ways for children to represent what they are learning and arranging for children to share what they are doing with their classmates. Finally, the children find ways to share what they have learned. Again, the teacher assists children in determining what will be shared and how it will be shared.

This three part structure helps the teacher to organize the progression of activities according to the development of children's interests, abilities and commitment to the topic.

IN-DEPTH STUDIES

In-depth studies may evolve out of themes or out of project work. They help children develop the disposition to be involved in complex learning over a long period of time. When children display a very strong, intense interest in a topic, it is time to abandon previous plans in order to extend and research this topic in depth.

"The mind I love must still have wild places, a tangled orchard where dark damsons drop in the heavy grass, an overgrown little wood, the chance of a snake or two (real snakes), a pool that nobody's fathomed the depth of—and paths threaded with those little flowers planted by the mind."
Katherine Mansfield

Children can be absorbed in finding out more and more, making connections and integrating new information with their previous knowledge. They regularly present new ideas as possibilities to develop. Their play may become more complex. They might adapt ideas, imagine play scenarios using gathered information, role play, bring in materials, construct and report. They may share nonfiction books and multimedia references and information from beyond the classroom. The children's interest in a topic is often carried into the home. Sometimes parents comment on what their child has told the family about the topic. Older siblings, parents and grandparents may be drawn into enthusiasm for the study and contribute information or materials. Some children are anxious to share their learning with their families and others in the school through such means as displays, construction projects or a public performance.

"Science is rooted in conversations."
Werner Heisenberg

Learning from in-depth studies extends further and further, deeper and deeper until finally the hunger for knowledge about this topic has been satisfied. As interest dwindles, the teacher brings the study to a natural close.

When teachers plan meaningful and purposeful activities—whether in themes, projects or in-depth studies—they assist children in becoming confident and competent learners as they develop knowledge and skills, solve problems, engage in metacognition and interact with others.

PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION FROM HOME TO SCHOOL

The best transitions for children occur when the introduction to school is gradual and integrates some familiar aspects of the home into the school environment. There are a variety of ways of doing this.

"When different talents and ideas rub up against each other, there is friction, yes. But also sparks, fire, light and—eventually—brilliance!"
Nancie O'Neill

TRANSITION OPTIONS

Kindergarten Blitz/Information Night

Jurisdiction or individual school promotions held in the spring of each year encourage parents to become aware of and involved in the upcoming kindergarten year.

Home Visits

Home visits give children an opportunity to meet the teacher in the security of their own home. The teacher is able to spend individual time with children and their families. Home visits can form the basis for developing positive and supportive relationships in the classroom.

Classroom Visits

An initial visit helps orient children to the school and the classroom in the company of trusted adults. The children and their families are then better prepared for the Kindergarten experience. Classroom visits may occur during a regular program day or outside of regular program hours.

Staggered Entry

Many teachers find that they can establish a better relationship with each child if children begin their Kindergarten experience in small groups. This special small group orientation occurs in the first week of school before the whole class experience begins. Staggered entry provides a valuable opportunity for children to get to know the teacher and the school/classroom environment without the pressure of beginning school work and facing a large unknown group of children.

PLANNING FOR THE FIRST DAYS IN KINDERGARTEN

"Learning is the making of meaning."
Robert Kegan

Children will experience many differing reactions to the first day of Kindergarten. Some will wish to remain by their parents' sides; others will be cautious observers or participants; still others will be avid explorers. A comfortable separation process for children and their parents may take several days or weeks. It is important for teachers to build trusting relationships and establish some predictable routines. This provides children and their parents the reassurance necessary to overcome anxiety and facilitate successful learning experiences.

Some suggestions for the first days include:

- greeting children and their families by name as they arrive
- beginning with a short first day and encouraging a parent or caregiver to remain with the child
- pointing out the location of the bathroom facilities and the water fountain
- encouraging children to bring a familiar object or photograph from home
- providing time for free exploration of materials
- allowing time for whole group activities; e.g., sing a name song to facilitate getting to know each other
- taking children on small trips to important locations in the school; e.g., office, library, gymnasium, playground, kitchen
- letting children select a cubby and their coat and shoe place
- reading a story about starting school
- inviting children to create a picture or painting for classroom walls
- taking children's photographs
- displaying photographs on a welcome wall
- providing playdough as a soothing and comforting manipulative material
- providing snack and/or drinks
- recognizing that some children may need parental support
- welcoming those parents that wish to remain in the classroom.

PLANNING FOR SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

The Kindergarten learning environment goes beyond the regular classroom activities. Special events are an important part of the Kindergarten experience. A special event can be a child's birthday, a holiday celebration, a lost tooth or a classroom experience that children note as special. It can be a field trip, the first snowfall or a visitor to the classroom. There are many possibilities but it is important that the special event is meaningful for children and stems from their needs and interests.

> *"Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but just look what they can do when they stick together."*
> Vista Kelly

Sometimes a special event will lead to a topic of study that brings together learning from different areas. For example, consider a scenario during the first snowfall in which children come in from recess eagerly talking about catching snowflakes on the sleeves of their jackets and watching them melt. The teacher may read them a book about snow and talk about the fact that snowflakes, like children, are all unique. The children may decide to make paper snowflakes and learn to write the word snow in their journals. The teacher may teach a song or finger play about snow. They may go home and ask their grandparents about the snowiest days they remember from their childhood. They may bring jars of snow in the classroom and see how long snow takes to melt in different locations in the room. From that first conversation about snowflakes, a whole topic of study has emerged.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are one way to help children see how their lives are connected with other people, places and things.

Field trips serve many purposes, such as:

- extending the learning environment
- using detailed, often new, vocabulary that contributes to children's oral language development
- providing stimulation and motivation to a given topic/theme/project
- providing an opportunity to practise social behaviors
- providing experiences that are new for some children
- making connections with the community
- providing cross-cultural experiences and cross-curricular experiences
- broadening children's understanding of a classroom topic under study
- introducing children to a new topic of study
- creating a shared experience.

When planning a field trip consider:

- previewing the site and talking to teachers and/or parents who have been there before
- learning possibilities
- availability of washroom facilities
- means of travel and parking if parents are attending
- availability of supervisors/volunteers
- emergency procedures and any allergy medicine that must be taken
- expenses involved
- payment methods
- preparing children for the visit
- opportunity for child participation
- child identification
- school policies
- special requests or considerations; e.g., inquire about collecting leaves from park ranger during a forest visit
- parent permission
- knowledge of community and resources; e.g., social, geographical and cultural issues
- relevance to children's concerns
- links to children's play and/or previous experiences
- opportunities for further reinforcing, extending and enriching children's learning
- using clipboards as "tripboards" for children to record observations and collect information
- contingency plans; e.g., poor weather, cancelled trips.

Some suggestions for field trips include:

- visiting the local supermarket to obtain ingredients for an upcoming cooking project, or to have a tour of the departments; e.g., bakery
- becoming familiar with all aspects of the school; e.g., collecting supplies from the office or storage room, visiting classroom pets in other classrooms, watching the milk truck arrive and the milk being unloaded, making a photocopy in the work room
- mailing letters at the local post office
- locating tadpoles at a neighbourhood pond
- making observations/drawings of natural objects in outdoor, nearby areas
- visiting a farm, veterinary clinic or pet store and community service agencies such as a hospital/medicentre, fire station, police station.

CLASSROOM VISITORS

Classroom visitors often provide powerful learning experiences for Kindergarten children. Visitors may be people or animals. It is through talking to parents and community members that many ideas for classroom visitors will be discovered.

> *"For me, education means to inspire people to live more abundantly, to learn to begin with life as they find it and make it better."*
> Carter Woodson

When planning to invite a visitor into your classroom consider:

- whether they have shared their ideas and interests with young children before
- talking with the visitor about the agenda of their visit—what materials they may need or will bring with them, whether they wish to interact with the children in a large or a small group
- ways to prepare the Kindergarten children for the new learning experiences
- amount of time needed for the visit; arrangements for additional time when/if necessary
- opportunities and physical arrangement for children to view and/or touch the materials or animals
- assistance the visitor may need
- preparation for the visit and follow-up activities
- forms of recognition; e.g., remuneration, thank you notes.

Some examples of classroom visitors may include:

- school trade workers
- storytellers
- musicians
- puppeteers
- health professionals
- scuba divers
- magicians
- safety representatives; e.g., block parents, RCMP, ZAP Patrol
- imagination market
- seniors/elders
- photographers
- parents sharing interests, skills and/or cultural traditions
- other.

FAMILY FUN NIGHTS

Family fun nights are a time when family members come and work together on a project or enjoy a group activity. They provide rich opportunities for all—particularly those who may be unable to be part of the regular day-time program.

"He who laughs, lasts!"
Chinese Proverb

When planning a Family Fun Night, consider:

- first, identifying interests/needs of the Kindergarten children and their families
- brainstorming a list of possible family evenings with the children and/or the Local Advisory Committee (LAC)
- identifying current classroom interests or topics of study; e.g., inviting parents to assist with making birdhouses during a nature study
- utilizing available venues in the community; e.g., a family BBQ at a local park; a family swim night at the local swimming pool
- establishing a contingency plan in case of unforeseen circumstances; e.g., booking the school gym in case it rains during the outdoor games night.

HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Holidays hold profound significance for children and their families and can reflect culture at a very deep level. Holiday celebrations should be incorporated into the Kindergarten program in ways that are mutually inclusive and respectful to all classroom members.

"The cistern contains, the fountain overflows."
William Blake

When determining whether to celebrate a particular holiday, consider:

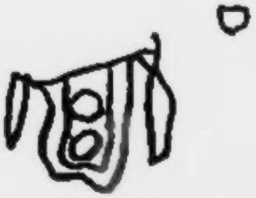
- children's experiences, interests and input
- sensitivity to family circumstances
- developmental appropriateness
- family beliefs and goals
- family involvement
- availability of material that is not outdated and/or stereotypical
- school policies.

CHAPTER FOUR

Children's Differing Needs

CHILDREN'S DIFFERING NEEDS

CHAPTER FOUR ... AT A GLANCE



This chapter relates to meeting the differing needs of children in the Kindergarten classroom. Practical information that includes helpful teaching strategies is provided on:

- early literacy
- children with English as a second language needs
- Aboriginal children
- children in French Immersion programs
- children in Francophone Kindergarten programs
- gender equity
- multiage/multigrade groupings
- children with special needs.

Stories of Practice connect the content of this chapter with Kindergarten children, teachers and classrooms are included in Appendix B.

Self-reflection that assists teachers in reflecting on their practice and identifying areas for growth is included in Appendix C.

Teacher Ideas that provide practical and useful information and sample forms for classroom use are included in Appendix D.

CHILDREN WITH DIFFERING NEEDS

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."
Eleanor Roosevelt

The Kindergarten program is based on the belief that all children can learn. In the Kindergarten room, children with a variety of needs and skill levels work and learn together. Some young children have special intellectual, emotional, sensory, physical and communication needs that affect their learning. Others experience situations that influence their learning, such as frequent changes of residence or lack of fluency in the language of instruction.

The teacher ensures that all children are included in activities that help them build on their own level of learning. Emphasis is placed on strengths and possibilities not on limitations. The learner expectations of the *Kindergarten Program Statement* are adapted and modified to meet the needs of each child.

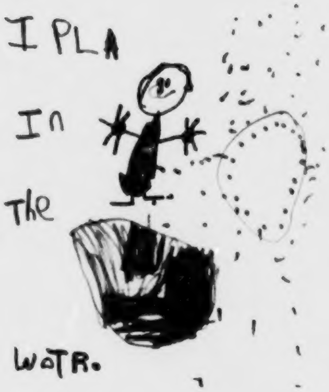
In every classroom and every school, children have differing needs. Teachers look for ways to find out what needs they can respond to and what needs should be responded to by others in the child's life.

Teachers may use some of the following approaches to determine a child's needs:

- take a few moments to watch and listen carefully—sometimes counting to ten gives an opportunity to make helpful observations
- ask, "what" is happening rather than "why". The "why" may become more obvious once the "what" is known.
- take time to talk with parents, asking them what they see as their child's needs and some of the ways they meet them at home
- find out from other teachers, administrators, consultants, elders and community health workers about local resources and procedures to access them
- set a variety of goals for themselves and the children, with suitable time periods suitable for each goal.

EARLY LITERACY

The Kindergarten program provides learning experiences that meet the developmental needs of all children. Children move through similar stages, but with their own pattern and at their own rate of development and learning. Most young children come to school eager and confident, ready to take on new challenges and learn new skills and ideas.



Some children experience difficulties in developing early literacy and reading readiness skills. Kindergarten teachers identify these children through regular classroom assessment and evaluation procedures. They may then work with early literacy consultants on further diagnosis and assessment to develop appropriate programming.

Helpful strategies to enhance the early literacy skills of children who have been assessed as in need of literacy assistance at the Kindergarten level include:

- providing extra programming in May and June to focus on centre, small group work and teacher led enrichment activities related to literacy development
- providing a language based instructional program throughout the year and grouping students according to literacy needs
- providing pull out/small group instruction related to literacy development in areas, such as concepts about print, letter/word identification, rhyming, shared writing, book talk

- beginning an intervention program in February that focuses on small group and individual motivation and activities related to listening—sounds, letters, rhyming, phonemic and phonological awareness.

"Once children learn how to learn, nothing is going to narrow their mind. The essence of teaching is to make learning contagious, to have one idea spark another."
Marva Collins

Alberta Learning provides Early Literacy Initiative funding to school authorities for additional human resources, the assessment and diagnosis of children, the acquisition of early literacy resources and the inservice of teachers and other staff involved in early literacy programming.

For further information, contact:

Special Programs Branch
Alberta Learning
Telephone: 780–422–6326
(Toll free: 310–0000)

CHILDREN WITH ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE NEEDS

Classrooms look very different these days, and a Kindergarten teacher may find that the classroom is a global village of many cultures and languages. Children with English as a Second Language (ESL) needs are part of almost every school population in Alberta.

ESL children are those whose home language(s) is not English and whose knowledge of English, in the professional opinion of an ESL specialist and classroom teacher, is insufficient to permit them to function successfully in an English-speaking school or society. Students who have ESL needs often require monitoring by teaching staff to ensure that they are continuing to experience success.

CURRENT PRACTICE

"Language grows out of life, out of its needs and experiences."
Anne Sullivan

When ESL children are included in the Kindergarten classroom right from the start, they are free to hear good models of language from their English-speaking peers and can continue conceptual development in all content areas. They learn best in cooperative learning settings where learning is child-centered and where they work with children from varied backgrounds.

Successful integration depends on a school's degree of effort and ability to ensure that ESL children contribute to the intellectual and social life of the school. The school's manner of communicating with parents/guardians of ESL children is extremely important to ensure that they and their children become full participants in the education process.

Also crucial to the success of the ESL child is the classroom teacher's positive attitude and understanding of the second language learning process. Both of these factors affect planning, teaching and assessment.

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

When ESL children come into the Kindergarten classroom, they already have an established first language for communicating—aside from any exceptional cases. Depending on their background, English may be the second, third, fourth or even fifth language they will learn.

The term second language refers to a language that is learned after the first language is relatively well established. By the age of five, many children have control over much of their first language grammar. Any language they learn subsequent to this will be filtered through their previously learned language(s). In this way, second language learning is qualitatively different from the first language learning process. Nonetheless, both first and second language learning are developmental processes in which the learner is actively testing hypotheses about the new system being learned.

PRINCIPLES OF FIRST AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

First Languages Learning Principles	Second Language Learning Principles
Learning and language growth are interwoven.	Language and concepts are developed together.
Meaning is central to language learning.	Focus is on meaning versus form.
Language learning builds on what learners already know about and can do with language.	Second language learning builds on previous knowledge and experience.
Language is learned from demonstrations of language in use.	Students learn more effectively when they use language for a purpose.
Language learning is enhanced through interaction.	Language is learned through social interaction.
Language is learned in supportive environments.	A supportive environment is key to learning a second language.
In and of itself, language can be a source of satisfaction and delight.	In and of itself, language can be a source of satisfaction and delight.
	Language must be adjusted so the child can understand what is being communicated.
	Language skills develop gradually.

While many of these principles parallel one another, there are differences in terms of application for the ESL child. As the Kindergarten teacher is a teacher of language to all students, an understanding of the second language learning principles and their implications is crucial for informed teaching and assessing of the ESL child.

FACTORS INFLUENCING SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Factors influencing the rate of learning a second language are:

- age and time of entry into the second language learning environment
- personality and learning style
- attitude and motivation to learn the new language

"Language is the autobiography of the human mind."
Max Müller

- possession of a natural talent or ear for learning languages
- language abilities in the first language
- similarity of the first language to the second language
- previous educational background
- previous exposure to and experience in the second language and the new culture
- physical and emotional health
- adjustment and supportiveness of the family toward the new language and culture
- community interest, resources and parental involvement in school programs
- perceived respect for and acknowledgement of the home language and culture by the new community
- maintenance of the child's' first language in and out of school
- supportive learning environments and skilled teachers who use a wide range of appropriately applied strategies.

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In order to create a supportive environment for children learning English as a Second Language, teachers need to consider both emotional and academic needs. Although young children are often thought of as being highly adaptable, ESL children are dealing with many dramatic changes. They must adjust to a new culture, a new educational and social system, a foreign physical environment and, very likely, a different socio-economic status. They may have come with a strong first and second language literacy background or may have experienced educational gaps due to war or trauma in their respective countries. Many ESL children may have to cope with these issues without family support.

Creating a supportive learning environment starts with a sensitive welcome and orientation and a classroom organized to promote second language learning. Such a classroom will consider both physical and psychological factors, such as different types of furniture and centre arrangements and different ways of participating in group work.

An awareness and accommodation of ESL children's language levels, through modified presentations of oral and written material, is also a crucial ingredient for creating a supportive learning environment.

WELCOMING AND TEACHING ESL CHILDREN

Strategies for welcoming and teaching the ESL child include:

- provide a positive welcome; e.g., smiling, "welcome" signs in various languages, correct pronunciation of child's name
- use the buddy system to help the new child learn the daily classroom routines
- allow for settling-in time, keeping close proximity with the child during that period
- provide individual attention
- help develop some language routines; e.g., teach a few simple phrases, use consistent language patterns and cues when giving instruction or asking questions, label objects
- use peer tutors and interpreters, if possible
- learn as much as possible about each child's linguistic, educational and cultural background
- recognize that learning to hear the new language and acquire a basic level of comprehension may take three to six months, depending on each child—during this time, the ESL child may not speak much at all
- speak naturally, but avoid complex structures and idioms
- use gestures and body movements to relay intentions; e.g., pantomimes, facial expressions
- provide wait time when asking a question
- use paraprofessionals and volunteers whenever possible.

> *"From the very beginning of his education, the child should experience the joy of discovery."*
> Alfred North Whitehead

Additional information and strategies for teaching ESL children are provided in *English as a Second Language: Elementary Guide to Implementation* (Alberta Education, 1996), available from the Learning Resources Centre and the Alberta Learning web site at <http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca>.

For further information, contact:

Curriculum Branch
Alberta Learning
Telephone: 780–427–2984
(Toll free: 310–0000)

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

The education of Aboriginal children responds to the individual needs of the child, the needs of parents, the needs of the community and the needs of the larger society within which we live.

Aboriginal children include Inuit, Metis and First Nations peoples. Within Alberta, there are eight distinct tribal groupings: Dunne-za, Siksika, Dene, Cree, Tsuu T'ina, Ojibway, Dene Tha' and Nakoda. Each grouping has its own unique name, language and culture.

VALUES AND BELIEFS OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

As in any society, there exists diversity among Aboriginal cultures and individuals. It is not possible to talk about a single Aboriginal culture or a single set of significant differences in values and beliefs. However, the values and beliefs of most traditional Aboriginal cultures in Alberta include:

- deep respect for the Creator and one's own inner spirit
- opportunities for centring the self and living in harmony with all creation
- belief, by many, that the circle is held sacred as it represents the idea that everything in nature is created to be round
- belief by people that a balance is needed in Mind, Body, Emotion and Spirit for a good life
- everyone has a right to make mistakes; every experience teaches us something
- feelings and mistakes are accepted without judgment
- experience is necessary for knowing
- all of life forms are connected
- people learn and hear when they are ready to learn and hear
- time is defined by experience rather than by the clock.

There are Aboriginal people who are living or have lived in an urban setting and are highly acculturated while others are still very traditional. There are many Aboriginal people who have accepted some of the non-traditional ideas but kept many traditional ways.

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

"Knowledge is life with wings."
Khalil Gibran

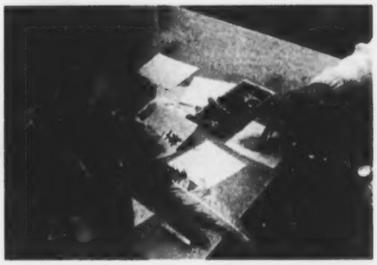
Traditional Aboriginal people believe that education focuses on the whole child. The extended family of parents, uncles, aunts, siblings, cousins, grandparents and community members all help rear the child. The social, physical, intellectual, emotional, cultural and spiritual aspects of the child are all important to healthy development. Effective classroom plans and activities include Aboriginal perspectives. Understanding Aboriginal traditional and contemporary history and contributions to society broadens social and cultural horizons for all children.

In Aboriginal cultures, children are often given freedom to explore. They are also taught the responsibility that goes with this freedom. Discipline is generally done in private in a quiet and gentle manner. Non-verbal language is also used. The child approaches an adult when the child is ready to learn. Diversity exists among the Aboriginal cultures and individuals and traditional values may vary among specific Aboriginal cultures and individuals. Local Aboriginal Elders and individuals inform the teacher about their specific family/ community values and traditions.

WELCOMING AND TEACHING ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

Some ways to welcome and teach Aboriginal children include:

- learning some words from specific Aboriginal Nation(s) represented in your classroom
- sharing classroom control and responsibility with children and family members
- avoiding singling children out for praise or criticism in front of the class



- allowing children to privately rehearse a skill before demonstrating competency publicly
- using more child-directed small groups
- emphasizing cooperative and collaborative learning
- utilizing a warm and personal teaching style
- being sensitive to nonverbal cues
- allowing longer pauses after asking questions
- establishing a pace and flow consistent with that of the children
- being a good listener
- becoming part of the community
- providing appropriate counselling services as necessary
- building life skills into the classroom program
- teaching more traditional parenting styles.

For further information, contact:

Aboriginal Services Branch
Alberta Learning
Telephone: 780–427–2952
(Toll free: 310–0000)

INDIAN PRAYER

Oh Great Spirit whose voice I hear in the winds
Whose breath gives life to the world, hear me
I come to you as one of your many children
I am small and weak
I need your strength and your wisdom
May I walk in beauty
Make my eyes behold the red and purple sunset
Make my hands respect the things that you have made

And my ears sharp to your voice
Make me wise so that I may know
The things you have taught your children
The lessons you have written in every leaf and rock
Make me strong, not to be superior to my brothers
But to fight my oldest enemy—myself
Make me ever ready to come to you with straight eyes

So that when life fades, as the fading sunset
My spirit may come to you without shame.

Author Unknown

CHILDREN IN FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS

FRENCH IMMERSION KINDERGARTEN

At first glance, a group of children learning and playing in the French Immersion (FI) Kindergarten classroom may look the same as any other group of children in a regular program. In both situations, they are busy playing and learning together in varied activity centres, interacting with each other while exploring ideas and the world around them. Closer observation of the immersion environment yields certain unique features—walls covered with French print materials, shelves displaying assorted French language books and a variety of language activities supported by visuals and mime.

Despite the fact that the teacher is the only fluent speaker of French in the classroom, children in FI Kindergarten spend much of their time singing, playing, listening and talking in French. Children, whose first language is not French, are immersed in this new target language. French becomes both an end in itself as a subject, as well as a means to an end as a vehicle for learning in other subject areas and for communicating in the classroom. The drive to communicate with the teacher provides an ideal motivational tool for children to learn the new language.

Children enrolled in the FI Kindergarten have needs similar to those of children in a regular Kindergarten program. Linguistic and cultural aspects of French are interwoven into daily activities and respect the nature, the developmental needs and the social backgrounds of all children.

LEARNING FRENCH IN AN IMMERSION SETTING

French is one of the two official languages of Canada. In Alberta, where English is dominant, French is a minority language. The FI Kindergarten offers an opportunity for non-Francophone children to be introduced to French in an educational setting. The FI Kindergarten program seeks to ensure that parents have the support needed to accompany their children in this worthwhile endeavour.

> *"Nothing takes root in mind when there is no balance between doing and receiving."*
> John Dewey

In the long term, the main goals of the FI program are:

- full mastery of the English language
- functional fluency in French
- understanding and appreciation of the French culture.

"To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture."
Frantz Fanon

The French Immersion Kindergarten is the first step of a child's journey into acquiring another language and gaining an appreciation of its culture. It emphasizes listening skills in order to prepare young children for more structured learning in the elementary grades.

The teacher talks, sings and responds to children only in French—English is used, of course, if a child's health or safety is at risk. Early in the Kindergarten year, children still communicate with each other in their first language. Gradually, as they become more familiar with new sounds and new words, children begin to sing along to well known songs, to include French words in their own speech, and eventually attempt to use French phrases to communicate.

ATTENDING THE FRENCH IMMERSION KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

The French Immersion Kindergarten is a program of choice open to all children of the appropriate age and offered in various communities in Alberta. It is designed for children whose first language is not French. While most of the children come from English-speaking families, some of them may have no prior knowledge of either French or English. For these children, French may be their second, third or fourth language. All of these children are welcome in the FI program.

Children with special needs can be integrated into the FI Kindergarten. "Researchers have found that immersion students with a variety of difficulties—from learning disabilities to low intelligence to behavioural problems—will do as well academically as they could be expected to do in an English program, provided they receive the same assistance as they would if enrolled in the English stream. Studies also indicate that immersion is not likely to be the cause of learning difficulties; the same problems would arise in any educational setting. Any student who can learn to communicate in his first language can acquire a second language through the immersion process[1]"

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[1] *Yes you can help! A guide for French Immersion Parents* (Alberta Education: Language Services Branch, 1996), p. 35.

LEARNING A SECOND, THIRD OR FOURTH LANGUAGE AT THE KINDERGARTEN LEVEL

Early childhood is a time of rapid intellectual growth and development. At the Kindergarten level, children's learning is spontaneous and imitative. Recent research has identified a window of opportunity—before the age of six—during which language development is at its most productive phase. Kindergarten is therefore an appropriate time for initial exposure to the target language.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FRENCH IMMERSION KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

> *"If we succeed in giving the love of learning, the learning itself is sure to follow."*
> John Lubbock

Effective FI Kindergarten teachers are critical to the success of the program. A healthy rapport with children, an ability to build a reassuring learning environment and an extensive knowledge of children's individual development processes are fundamental strengths of an effective FI Kindergarten teacher. As models of language, it is essential that FI Kindergarten teachers be well aware of particular issues concerning the second language learning process. In planning for effective teaching they must take into consideration, among other things, the linguistic and socio-linguistic abilities of the children, their non-verbal communication skills and their knowledge of the world around them.

THE FRENCH IMMERSION APPROACH IN KINDERGARTEN

The French Immersion approach is based on the premise that a second language is best learned, at this age, using a gentle approach somewhat similar to the way a first language is acquired. This will expose children to rich and varied language activities and help develop the fundamentals of oracy—a necessary step to reading, speaking and writing in the second language. In later years, as children become increasingly bilingual, they will learn to think in the second language. They begin this process by building two distinctive labels for one concept. The interplay between their first language and the target language is taken into consideration by the teacher who will capitalize on a child's background knowledge and choose appropriate second language learning strategies.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

French immersion teachers at the Kindergarten level take into consideration all learning principles that are important for the second language learner.

Children learn French to their full potential when they:

- are immersed in French
- are exposed to excellent linguistic models
- have frequent interaction with the Francophone community and are exposed to its language and culture
- are encouraged and supported by their families, schools and communities.

Children learn French to their full potential when language:

- is used as a means to communicate
- is taught in meaningful contexts
- is presented in authentic, significant and interactive activities
- is discovered using a wide variety of texts and types of discourse.

"Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming."
Paulo Freire

Children learn French to their full potential in a learning environment that:

- feels secure and invites risk-taking
- considers errors as important steps in the learning process
- builds on the children's interests and needs
- takes into account children's background knowledge, learning styles, and multiple intelligences
- provides choices
- adopts evaluation practices that respect all of the above learning principles.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN CHILDREN'S SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

"He teaches who gives and he learns who receives."
Ralph Waldo Emerson

As French is a minority language in Alberta, the school environment in general, and the kindergarten class in particular, may provide the only opportunity children will have to listen to or to communicate in French. Parents can play an important role in complementing and supporting language learning at home by joining in with their children in activities, such as listening to French TV, looking at French books and participating in French cultural events. Parents are also encouraged to provide their children with a rich literacy environment where all kinds of reading and writing matter in the family's first language are easily accessible. Reading in a child's first language is very important in promoting literacy development and will have a direct impact on learning in the second language or any other languages.

Expectations for learning in the French Immersion Kindergarten program are set out in the program statement entitled *Français langue seconde: Programme d'éducation de la maternelle – Immersion* (Alberta Learning, 1999). Support documents for teachers and parents are currently being developed for the FI Kindergarten program.

For further information, contact:

French Language Services Branch
Alberta Learning
Telephone: 780–427–2940
(Toll free: 310–0000)

CHILDREN IN FRANCOPHONE (FRENCH AS A FIRST LANGUAGE) PROGRAMS

Children in French as a First Language (FFL) Kindergarten play, learn and live in French. They are exposed to French both inside and outside of the classroom environment. For these Francophone children, French is not only a language used for thinking, learning and communicating in school, it is also an important part of who they are and where they came from. French impacts the choices they will make and how they live and interact with others at home, at school and in the community.

SECTION 23 OF THE CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Children in the FFL Kindergarten all share a common bond—they have a direct family link to the French culture. Their parents have the right, protected under the Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, to have access to French first language education for their children. In Alberta, where French speaking people are in a minority setting, either parent must meet at least one of Section 23's criteria in order to have access to FFL education for their children.

LEARNING IN A FRENCH FIRST LANGUAGE SETTING IN ALBERTA

French is one of the two official languages of Canada. Since French is the language and culture of a minority in Alberta, the presence and role of the French language may differ greatly from one child's home to another. A number of children live in a family setting where French is the only language spoken at home. These children are functionally fluent when entering Kindergarten. Others, surrounded by English in most areas of their life, have developed minimum skills to communicate in French. All of these children are welcome in the FFL Kindergarten.

"The challenge for us is to see beyond the innumerable fragments to the whole, stepping back far enough to appreciate how things move and change as a coherent entity."
Margaret Wheatley

Francophone children have particular linguistic, cultural, and identity needs. To address these needs, a framework has been created. From it, appropriate strategies and teaching tools can be developed to optimize children's growth and learning experiences in all areas of their life including their personal, school and community settings.

Some of the linguistic, cultural and identity priorities in the FFL Kindergarten program include:

- helping children identify with the values and way of life in the French community

- making the French language and culture central components to all areas of classroom and school life
- ensuring ongoing interaction with and integration in the Francophone community.

The French language, culture and Francophone community life will impact Francophone children throughout their life.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE FRENCH AS A FIRST LANGUAGE AND THE FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS

"Learning is the eye of the mind."
Thomas Drake

The French as a First Language and the French Immersion Kindergarten programs are often considered one and the same, as French is the language of communication and learning in both cases. In reality, they are very different programs. Some of the distinct differences and similarities include:

French First Language Program	French Immersion Program
• Mastery of French as a first language is one of the main goals of the program.	• Functional fluency in French is the goal.
• Mastery of English.	• Mastery of English.
• French is present in all aspects of school as well as in the community and home life.	• The language used outside of classroom activities and in the home life is either English or a language other than English or French.
• The FFL school is an extension of the Francophone families and of the Francophone community; it supports children and their families in linguistic and cultural growth.	
• Cultural integration and the development of a strong identity and a sense of belonging to the Francophone community are integrated into the program and the heart of the school.	• Children gain an understanding and appreciation of the French culture.
• Parents have the right, under Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, to access FFL schools for their children.	• All parents can choose a FI Kindergarten for their children, where the program is offered.

"Meaning-making is a history of transformations."
Robert Kegan

- Parental commitment to French language and culture in the home is essential to their children's development of genuine sense of identity; this fosters a desire to belong to, participate in and contribute to the Francophone community.
- In the home, parents engage in literacy experiences, with their children, in their first language.
- In the home, parents foster a positive attitude toward French and encourage their children to participate in activities in French where possible and desirable.
- In the home, parents engage in literacy experiences with their children in their first language.

THE SCHOOL/HOME/COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

The school/home/community partnership is vital to the success of the FFL Kindergarten. A close relationship of this nature ensures good communication between the home, the school and the community. Collaboration among all individuals contributing to children's language and cultural development is essential to Francophones in Alberta and is crucial when considering the needs of a student population which is small in number, geographically dispersed and has relatively few professional and material resources in French.

Parents are the foundation of the school/home/community partnership. Learning and "living" French in Alberta does not necessarily occur naturally. Rather, it is something that parents, with the support of the FFL school and community, choose and value in their family life. It is through families' commitment and integration to the culture and community that children are able to learn and live in French in Alberta.

"To see, to perceive is more than to recognize."
John Dewey

Expectations for learning in the French as a First Language Kindergarten program are set out in the program statement entitled *Français langue première: Programme d'éducation de la maternelle*, (Alberta Learning, 1999). Support documents for teachers and parents are currently being developed for the FFL Kindergarten program.

For further information, contact:

French Language Services Branch
Alberta Learning
Telephone: 780–427–2940
(Toll free: 310–0000)

GENDER EQUITY

Gender equity in the classroom refers to the recognition that boys and girls are given equal opportunity to experience all aspects of the Kindergarten community. An environment is created where both boys and girls are invited to experiment with play and work, involving a variety of possibilities and role models.

BUILDING AWARENESS

It is important that children are introduced to a wide variety of positive gender role models. During planning and instruction teachers can foster this through their choices of books, stories, poems, songs, games, videos, field trips, classroom visitors, parent participation and classroom management styles.

Some practical examples include:

- when planning a visit to the fire hall, try to arrange it on a day when a female firefighter is available
- read stories to children that have male and female characters in a variety of roles
- at centres, such as playhouse or blocks, directly encourage and welcome the participation of both boys and girls
- allow for the higher level of physical activity that Kindergarten boys often display.

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

> *"The doll corner … is not simply a place to play; it is a stronghold against ambiguity.… The boys have been trying to leave the doll corner since they came to Kindergarten. They are superheroes now—or feel they should be. The girls do not object to superheroes or robbers in the doll corner as long as they play the way girls play."*
> Vivian Gussin Paley

As children engage in play with other children they share their ideas and beliefs about gender. They might accept both boys and girls in the role of doctor or fire fighter but may not be as willing to accept a boy in the role of teacher if the Kindergarten teacher is female. Class discussions about situations such as this may help children understand that many roles are not just assigned to boys or girls, men or women. Discussions can be followed by further exploration in literature, or through classroom guests or field trip experiences.

Awareness of the children's ideas and beliefs encourages teachers to examine their own ideas as well. When writing in a journal or reflecting on classroom planning, teachers may find examples of play and work that encouraged children to experiment with a role or responsibility that was new to them. They may also wonder about the roles and responsibilities that have become accepted in their classroom community. Are expectations different for boys and girls? Is it always the boys who are asked to carry heavier items? Is it always girls who do the cleaning up? Is discipline different for boys and girls?

MULTIAGE/ MULTIGRADE GROUPINGS

> *"The learning that takes place at home has also shown us how to recognize the effectiveness of peer teaching and the effortless learning that results from peer interactions. Parents include all their children, regardless of their age or level of maturity, in family activities. The recognition that "family grouping" works equally well in schools has become the foundation for multi-age teaching."*
>
> Anne Forester
> and Margaret Reinhard

RATIONALE AND BENEFITS

Multiage/multigrade groupings for the Kindergarten–Grade 1 (K–1) classroom are sometimes created by the necessity of enrollments or by the choice of the teacher and administration. Whether by necessity or by choice, there are benefits to grouping children of different ages/grades together into a class.

By combining grade levels, the idea that all children in a learning group are achieving at a similar level is lessened. Teachers can focus on programming for the actual learning needs of individual children.

Beginning-of-the-year anxiety is reduced for those children who are spending another year with the same teacher. Children new to the program have older models and helpers to initiate them. The previous year's parent volunteers continue to be involved, welcoming new children and acting as program advocates for the new parents.

There is less pressure for teachers when they know they have two years as opposed to 10 months to work with a group of children. They begin each year knowing the learning needs of half the class and having a significant number of students who are already familiar with classroom routines and expectations.

One of the biggest hurdles children experience early in school is the transition from Kindergarten to Grade 1. Traditionally, these two programs can be quite dissimilar. Teachers of K–1 combinations find a smooth transition from one program to another.

Many teachers of multigrade groupings do not encounter a significantly wider range in children's abilities and needs than exist in single-grade groupings. When treated as a single learning group, children of different ages are able to work together according to their interests and abilities. Needs of the individual child rather than age or number of years in school, determine what the learning experiences will be.

Individualization is achieved in multigrade classes through use of a broad range of resources that meet the specific needs of each child. Activities are open-ended, involve choice and invite active participation. This accommodates a broad range of interests and ability levels. When necessary, learning groups may be established according to need and/or interest.

OTHER ASPECTS

> *"If you are the parent of two or more children, you can begin to comprehend what teachers are up against with a classroom of many more unique characters."*
> Seymour Sarason

The benefits of a multiage grouping such as a K–1 combination are limited if:

- only children who are viewed as not being ready for Grade 1 are placed into the K–1 combination
- the K–1 combination is viewed as a short-term solution to budget constraints
- it is treated as a "split grade" rather than a combination. In a split grade, it is more likely that the Kindergarten and Grade 1 children will be treated as two distinct and separate learning groups in a classroom with perhaps desks on one side and centres on the other.

Teachers working in a multiage/multigrade class can feel isolated when they are not connected with other teachers in similar programs. Parent and administrative support is also important to successful implementation of multiage/multigrade groupings.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Developing and maintaining meaningful programs for children with special needs is one of the most intriguing challenges faced by educators. Children with special needs, including those who are gifted and talented, require specialized learning opportunities in order to receive the best possible education.

> *"I am forever on the way."*
> Maxine Greene

The challenge for teachers is to provide each child with programming that:

- provides challenge and success
- promotes growth
- involves the child as an active learner and therefore increases the potential for meaningful learning
- provides age and developmentally appropriate learning experiences
- enhances the continuity of learning
- increases the child's self-esteem by helping the child maximize learning opportunities. Motivation and promotion of self-esteem is based on real successes in learning experiences.

INTEGRATION AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING

There are different approaches to educating children with special needs, depending on individual learning needs, family and school circumstances and the availability of appropriate programming.

Integration, inclusive schooling and mainstreaming are all terms that are often used interchangeably. Definitions of these terms varies with the literature cited. A report on *Integrating Exceptional Students in the Mainstream* (Alberta Education, 1991) included three definitions to help clarify these terms for educators in Alberta.

Integration is the process of including students with exceptional needs into the regular school program.

Inclusive schooling provides education for all students in a regular classroom regardless of the nature of the student's disability.

Mainstreaming is the act of combining the skills of regular and special educators to assure that all children have equal education opportunities in the least restrictive environment. This term is often used in American research.

"How we learn is what we learn."
Bonnie Friedman

The difference between an inclusive school and a school that practices mainstreaming or integration is that inclusive schools develop accommodating environments for all students, while mainstreaming or integration practices attempt to fit certain students into what currently exists.

POLICY

In 1993, Alberta Education adopted the following policy regarding the placement of children with special needs:

> Educating students with exceptional needs in regular classrooms in neighborhood or local schools shall be the first placement option considered by school boards, in consultation with students, parents/guardians and school staff.

The policy includes four main principles:

- A regular classroom setting should be considered as the first placement option for children with special needs.
- A range of placement options should be provided to meet the diverse and unique needs of children.
- Placement in an alternate setting should be provided when it is in the best interests of the child with special needs and other children in the class.
- Parents/Guardians and children must be informed of the choices available to them and be actively involved in placement and program discussions.

PROGRAM UNIT FUNDING

Program Unit Funding (PUF) is provided to approved Early Childhood Services (ECS) operators for children with severe disabilities who require additional support above that offered in a regular ECS program. Funding is provided for individual programs that meet the educational needs of children with severe disabilities. The PUF is available for a maximum of three years for each eligible child who is between 2 years 6 months of age and six years of age as of September 1. To receive this funding, a child must be eligible according to the criteria described for at least one of the severe disabling conditions listed in Section 2.5 of the *Funding Manual for School Authorities* (Alberta Learning). This funding is in addition to the Basic Instruction funding provided for every ECS child, if the child was registered as of September 30.

Payment of funding is based on approval of the PUF application. An Individualized Program Plan (IPP) must be developed for each child, and the child's parents must be involved in the development of the IPP. Parents are an integral part of the planning and decision-making process and must be involved in and informed of all aspects of their child's program. A budget for each program unit is required as part of the application and must be based on the program outlined in the child's IPP. The PUF application is to be submitted as early as possible in the school year. The deadline for funding applications is February 1 of the program year. Applications for children who are diagnosed or registered after February 1 will be accepted until May 1.

Further information is available in the current *ECS Program Unit Funding: A Handbook for ECS Operators* (Alberta Learning) and *Funding Manual for School Authorities* (Alberta Learning). Questions regarding Program Unit Funding can be directed to:

Special Programs Branch
Alberta Learning
Telephone: 780–422–6326
(Toll free: 310–0000)

MILD/MODERATE SPECIAL NEEDS

Funding is provided to approved ECS operators for children with mild or moderate special needs, who are between 3 years 6 months and 6 years of age as of September 1. Mild or moderate funding is in addition to the Basic Instruction Funding and is available to support early intervention and ensure children a better opportunity for success. There must be documentation to support the child's mild or moderate needs and an IPP is required for each child. Definitions of mild and moderate special needs are provided in the *Guide to Education for Children with Special Needs* (Alberta Education, 1997).

"Who dares to teach must never cease to learn."
John Cotton Dana

Further information is available in the current *Funding Manual for School Authorities* (Alberta Learning). Questions regarding funding for children with mild or moderate special needs can be directed to:

Special Programs Branch
Alberta Learning
Telephone: 780–422–6326
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MULTIDISCIPLINARY SUPPORT TEAMS

Teachers, parents, school administrators, teacher assistants, resource facilitators and other professionals—public health nurse, speech pathologist, physical therapist, occupational therapist—all have important roles to play in supporting children with special needs in the Kindergarten classroom. Some of them may become part of a school-based multidisciplinary support team. The purpose of such a team is to function as a source of prompt, practical support for teachers serving children with special needs in the regular classroom. Members of the support team attend scheduled, structured meetings to exchange ideas and techniques, problem solve and brainstorm. Committed, cooperative relationships among the team members lie at the heart of schools that care for the needs of all children. Team members may include the school principal or designate, classroom teachers, resource facilitators, parents, teacher assistants and the school counsellor.

Information on establishing multidisciplinary support teams is available in *A Vision Shared: Towards Inclusive Education*, (Alberta Education, 1990).

THE INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAM PLAN

All children with identified needs require an Individualized Program Plan (IPP). Children with special needs are often identified prior to entering school. However, Kindergarten is often the first formal learning setting and can be the first time a learning difficulty is identified. If a Kindergarten child requires program modifications and adaptations to facilitate their success in the classroom, it is necessary to write an IPP for that child.

"Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step."
Martin Luther King, Jr.

The IPP is a written commitment of intent by an educational team. It is meant to ensure the provision of appropriate programming for children with special needs and to act as a working document. It also provides a record of student progress. Modifications in programming to meet the educational needs of students are reflected and documented in each child's individualized program plan.

An IPP describes what the child knows and can do, what and how the child is to learn next, where the instruction will take place, who will provide it, how long it may take and what the child will do to demonstrate learning.

The IPP includes the following items:

- assessed level of educational performance; e.g., test scores, checklists, baseline data, teacher grades
- strengths and areas of need
- required classroom accommodations; i.e., any changes to instructional strategies, assessment procedures, materials, resources, facilities , equipment or personnel
- long-term goals and short-term objectives and how these will be assessed
- assessment procedures for short-term objectives
- special education and related services to be provided
- review dates, results and recommendations
- transition plans
- relevant medical information.

"Intelligence develops because it functions ... and it grows from within."
Jean Piaget

In addition to basic demographic information, such as child's name, grade, school, the IPP may include information that will be helpful to other staff members, a subsequent teacher and/or the parent. This might include:

- identification of strategies that worked and those that were not successful
- clear articulation of any additional assistance provided
- the classroom context—size of groupings, staff ratio, unique features
- parent and child priority goals
- parent and child involvement
- checklists; e.g., skills acquired, work habits, attitudes, behaviours
- other staff involved.

IDENTIFYING AND ASSESSING CHILDREN'S STRENGTHS AND NEEDS

When identifying and assessing children's strengths and needs, teachers start with gathering information on all children, including those with special needs for whom IPPs are written.

Teachers learn about children's strengths and needs through observation, reviewing their work in current learning activities, records, and talking to the children and their parents. They also conduct some formal assessments to identify starting points for children. Other professionals may provide expertise on particular skills and knowledge that can be helpful in planning adaptations and modifications to learning opportunities for some children.

"A willing heart adds feather to the heel."
Joanna Baillie

To ensure support for children, teachers and parents in making a child's first year of formal schooling successful, a support team can be set up formally or informally. Together, this team of parents, teachers and other professionals provide a wide spectrum of ideas. During the first few weeks of school, the support team works together to identify the strengths, interests and needs of specific children and to set priorities. Regular meetings throughout the year enable the support team to monitor the children's progress and dispositions about learning and to modify the activities and adaptations as necessary.

INDICATORS OF POSSIBLE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

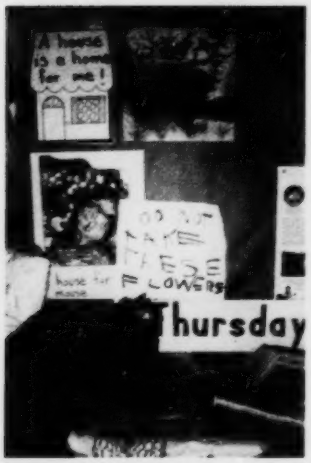
Certain behaviours may indicate that a child is having learning difficulties. Teachers will want to consider this possibility if the child:

- exhibits classroom behaviour that is significantly different from other children in the class; e.g., more inconsistency; more difficulty starting/completing activities, organizing, or socializing with peers
- has difficulty with auditory comprehension and listening skills; e.g., following directions, understanding and following class discussions, retaining information received aurally, understanding vocabulary
- has difficulty with expressive language skills; e.g., speaking in complete phrases or sentences, using appropriate vocabulary, recalling words needed to express ideas, discussing things sequentially
- has difficulty with academic work; e.g., visually differentiating between numbers and letters, understanding some concepts, such as comparing, sorting and patterning
- has orientation difficulties; e.g., the concept of time, finding way around the school, understanding relationships such as big–little, on top of–under, near–far, beside–in front of, behind, short–long
- has difficulty with motor skills; e.g., fine motor skills—holding a crayon, using scissors; coordination—hopping on one foot, balancing, walking on a line, climbing one stair at a time, catching or throwing a ball.

These behaviours do not necessarily identify children as having learning difficulties. However, they are indicators that may assist teachers to decide if further assessment is needed.

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Kindergarten program is based on the belief that all children can learn. Teachers create learning environments that encourage all children, including those with special needs, to participate so they can develop and learn and optimize their potential.



Some ideas for creating a supportive learning environment include:

- systematic planning of an appropriate program for children with special needs—i.e., an IPP—based on assessments conducted by qualified professionals
- implementing the program with qualified teachers, assistants and support staff
- providing age-appropriate settings with suitable resources and physical adaptations
- actively intervening to enhance the social skills, acceptance and interactions of children with special needs; e.g., peer tutoring and group activities where all children can participate
- focusing on children's strengths and the contributions each child can make to the learning environment
- allowing children to progress at their own pace according to their own capabilities and modifying the curriculum when necessary
- using frequent praise-specific statements and teaching in a way that welcomes all children with their unique qualities and capabilities, celebrates their uniqueness and provides optimism about their potential
- allowing children to try new approaches in an environment that encourages and provides support for appropriate risk-taking
- modifying instructional strategies to accommodate diverse learning styles and a variety of skill levels
- providing motivating tasks that engage and challenge children and thus increase concentration on tasks
- providing a curriculum that prepares children for probable future environments
- assessing and evaluating children according to expectations for learning that are modified to meet individual needs
- including the participation of parents/guardians in all aspects of the children's programming.

> *"Teach the children! It is painting in fresco."*
> Ralph Waldo Emerson

TEACHING STRATEGIES

> *"If [the teacher] is indeed wise, he does not bid you enter the house of wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind."*
> Kahlil Gibran

Effective teachers select strategies based on their judgments about the nature of the child, what the child can do, and what knowledge, skills and attitudes the child should learn next.

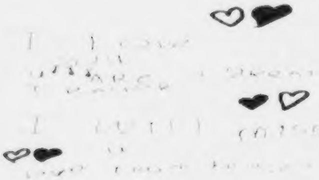
Strategies are not generally tied to specific needs or differences in children. A strategy that works well with a gifted and talented child may also be effective with a child who has a learning disability or a behaviour disorder. Strategies that are useful to children with special needs are often helpful for all children in the class. Strategies for enhancing social skills or self-concept, for example, can be integrated into any of the learning areas in the *Kindergarten Program Statement*.

To meet the needs of all children, choose strategies that:

- create a supportive learning environment
- encourage independence
- foster self esteem
- focus on student strengths
- work on acceptance for all children
- be sensitive to the needs of the family.

To create a supportive environment in the classroom:

- establish a clear routine
- set consistent limits
- provide transition time to help children prepare for a change; e.g., sing a song for transition to clean-up time
- break up the day with short time spans of large group activities, small group activities and free play time
- give children their own spot during large group time by using a piece of carpet or small stool.



To teach effectively:

- accommodate different learning styles by using a variety of modes, such as using pictures or objects for visual learners, along with spoken messages for auditory learners and hands on activities for kinesthetic learners
- rank learning areas and tasks in order of importance for the child's total academic and real life functioning
- pace teaching according to the child's learning rate
- decrease or increase the complexity of a task to meet the developmental needs of the child
- adapt the content of some class activities for the individual's child's needs

- break tasks into small steps and teach strategies for how to accomplish tasks
- encourage active learning/participation
- make sure to have the child's attention prior to giving instructions
- give short, simple and specific instructions
- offer the child a choice when making a request to give the child some control over the environment
- encourage cooperative learning to provide an opportunity for children to help each other and to provide positive role models
- use ongoing assessment and evaluation to monitor a child's progress and needs and to plan for next steps
- be flexible.

"A good teacher feels his way, looking for response."
Paul Goodman

To help develop appropriate behaviours:

- be consistent and proactive in a developmentally appropriate manner
- reinforce positive behaviours by specifically stating what the child did immediately; e.g., nice sitting, nice sharing the blocks
- find out what positive reinforcements are important to the child such as praise, rewards—stickers, bubbles—and play time
- redirect the child to encourage acceptable behaviour using instructions or prompting in the least obtrusive manner
- provide a safe and caring environment and be responsive to behaviour that might harm a child
- make expectations clear and reinforce positive behaviours
- keep anecdotal records of behaviours that cause concern: describe the incident, the behaviour and the consequence of the behaviour
- assist children in making decisions by setting appropriate rules or limits and providing appropriate choices in their lives; e.g., "You can do A or B"
- provide an environment that encourages independence but supports children asking for assistance.

To enhance effectiveness as a teacher:

- think about effective organizational strategies
- try to consider yourself as a learning facilitator
- learn to efficiently use resources and involve others
- plan an integrated and coordinated program in collaboration with parents, other teachers, professionals and children.

Additional information on planning and instruction is available in the following resources available from the Learning Resources Centre:

Programming for Students with Special Needs. (Books 1–8). Alberta Learning, 1995–2000.

Behaviour Disorders in Schools: A Practical Guide to Identification, Assessment and Correction. Alberta Education, 1986.

OBSERVING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOURS AND ADAPTING INSTRUCTION

When observing children's behaviour

- identify what the child is actually doing, or not doing in the classroom that is causing concern
- describe what is happening in terms of the situation, the behaviour and the consequence
- think about the types of teaching strategies that may work to change the behaviour
- Observe for a while and make notes on what works.

Formal assessments usually only follow after extensive observation and consultation with others.

The following table provides some scenarios, questions and suggestions for behaviours that cause concern

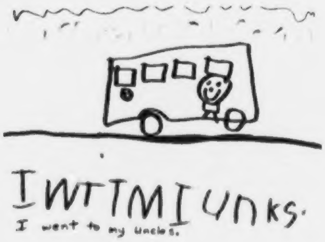
What you observe/know	What you wonder	What you can try
Bobby "fades out" during instructions and needs continual reminders of what to do in activities.	• Why can't Bobby attend? • The others can follow through with instructions—does Bobby have some kind of attention problem?	• Make instructions short, clear and concise. • Give opportunities for Bobby to complete sections of a task. Then give the next step.
Jack wriggles and squirms throughout circle times.	• Why is Jack so disruptive? • He is so much more active than the others—could he be hyperactive? • Should I ask a behaviour consultant to come in?	• Decide on realistic levels of behaviour—reassess the length of circle time and comfortable attention span for the group; break up listening time with time to have a stretch or "shake the sillies out." • Observe Jack's attention span at other activities; e.g., sand table or blocks. • Check with parents about behaviour at home, grandma's house, or on the soccer team. • Monitor the strategies you use in the classroom.

What you observe/know	What you wonder	What you can try
Zoe keeps pulling the other children's hair and then runs away quickly if they make a fuss or cry.	• Why can't Zoe behave? She knows the classroom rules. • If she's trying to get my attention, she certainly is getting it—but should I be giving it to her?	• Use gesture—pointing, shaking your head—to indicate you have noted an undesirable behaviour. Monitor this strategy consistently for a week and check for improvement. • Work with Zoe on-to-one on social skills, like making friends and getting along with others.
Ricky has been identified as having a developmental delay. He is having trouble following directions and joining in class activities.	• Although I speak slowly and clearly, Ricky can't manage to do much work independently. • I know his aide can help him hand over hand if necessary, but how can I build independent learning skills?	• Decide on what is developmentally appropriate for Ricky and keep requests at this level. • Modify expectations and prioritize the most functional activities.
Hanako began to read at an early age and is already several grade levels above age peers. She has a strong vocabulary. She asks many questions and often is not satisfied with simple answers.	• Is Hanako "gifted"? • What do I do with her in my classroom as she has already covered the academic part of the kindergarten curriculum?	• Encourage Hanako's reading. • Provide classroom reading materials at her level. • If she is writing, encourage challenging activities at the writing centre; e.g., extending the activity presently suggested there, creating a class newspaper, teaming with others to interview classmates, using a tape recorder, then writing what was learned about them.
Bob has a preference to be with adults or older children.	• Does Bob have difficulty with his social skills? • Does he consider the other children too babyish? • How should I handle this?	• Talk to Bob about being in school. • Work together to create a circle of friends chart for Bob. • Ask his parents who he spends time with outside the classroom. • Use social scripts about how to join an activity. • Use peer partners at recess.

What you observe/know	What you wonder	What you can try
Sandra seems to learn things at a much slower rate than other children. She has more success with active tasks rather than passive ones. She seems to need you to explain things many times and has difficulties focusing her attention.	• I am concerned about Sandra—I wonder what is going on. • Could she have some learning problems that are making things difficult for her?	• Monitor Sandra's progress over two weeks—trying to identify which difficulties occur and ensuring that she meets some success each day. • Structure topics and instructional time in terms of schedules, directions, expectations, adequate time and not too many choices. • If after sufficient time, you are still concerned, talk to her parents about referring Sandra to the special education teacher or counsellor for a developmental assessment that will help you to program more efficiently for her.
Julio rubs his eyes all the time.	• Is Julio's vision a problem? • Does he also squint or blink a lot? • Is this just a habit? • Can he stop when asked?	• Observe to see if he also squints or blinks and if he can stop when asked. • Ask his parents if he's tired for any reason, and if he's ever had his vision tested.

PLANNING FOR AND TEACHING CHILDREN WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING NEEDS

In planning for and teaching children with specific learning needs in the regular classroom, teachers think of ways to meet their learning needs in a supportive environment.


IWTTMIUnks.
I went to my uncle's.

Children with physical disabilities can more easily feel a part of a regular classroom and its activities if the Kindergarten teacher:

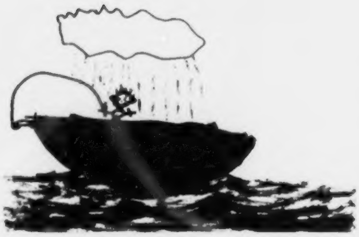
- arranges for modification of the physical setting; e.g., access for equipment, walkers, wheelchairs, standing frames, special chairs
- includes the child as much as possible in center times
- arranges the physical space for group activities like circle time and story time to accommodate the child
- allows other child to be helpers, if their help is requested
- adapts games and gymnasium activities so the child is included
- openly discusses a child's equipment with others so all children feel comfortable
- has the child with special needs explain something about how their equipment functions.

Children who are withdrawn or passive may be very resistant or refuse to take part in the class. These suggestions may be helpful:

"Dare to dream, dare to try, dare to fail—dare to succeed."
G. Kinsley Wood

- plan activities that provide the child with opportunities to express themselves through drama, role playing (assertive and aggressive roles), and art
- structure group times to highlight these children's strengths
- reward all children for participation in group activities
- try to get to know the children and their interests to give you an idea of what will hook their interest
- give these children special jobs helping out in the classroom.

Children with behaviour difficulties, through direct instruction, modelling and rewarding appropriate behaviours, are given help with:



- learning to interpret events realistically and determine socially appropriate responses
- developing skills to identify and cope with real and exaggerated concerns and thoughts
- developing self-management skills
- using problem-solving strategies
- recognizing appropriate behaviours
- eliminating inappropriate behaviours
- making decisions and judgements.

Children who are gifted and talented are often hard to identify in Kindergarten, because they are so young and in their first year of school. However some indicators may be that a child:

- has a good memory and is exceptionally adept at retaining numbers and other symbols
- likes to experiment, hypothesize and test out new ideas
- has a good reasoning ability and understands quickly
- has intense concentration
- may be a perfectionist
- demonstrates leadership abilities
- is moralistic—strong sense of right and wrong; deep sense of conviction
- shows an advanced sense of humour.

Children with very high activity levels are often somewhat disruptive in a classroom environments. Ways to help a highly active child function successfully in a regular Kindergarten classroom include:

"Education is not a preparation for life; education is life itself."
John Dewey

- talking with the child about appropriate ways to release frustration and restlessness
- allowing the child some freedom of movement in the classroom
- sending this child on errands
- working on short term goals and keeping instructions and tasks short
- scheduling a variety of activities in short time spans
- rewarding appropriate behaviour often and immediately
- trying to intervene when possible when a potential problem is looming
- being consistent and making expectations clear.

Children with difficulty controlling emotions cope more easily with the Kindergarten environment when the teacher structures the setting to provide them with clear and consistent expectations by:

- reminding the child of an alternative to physical actions; e.g., saying "use your words"
- making few requests and only one at a time so the child is not overwhelmed
- getting the child's attention before making requests
- being clear and specific so the child knows what is expected
- being brief when explaining things to the child
- modelling the appropriate behaviour
- redirecting the child to something else, when disruptive behaviour is occurring or about to occur
- praising positive behaviour.

Children who are cognitively delayed, according to Andrews and Lupart (1993), need help in regular classes with:

- developing basic academic skills
- improving their ability to interact with others
- enhancing speech and language skills
- developing information processing strategies
- increasing self management skills
- developing their self concept
- generalizing information.

"Change is the end result of all true learning."
Leo Buscaglia

Children with language difficulties can be assisted in their language develop when the Kindergarten teacher:

- establishes a physical setting that encourages talking
- provides opportunities for children to interact with language
- provides opportunities for children to use language for a variety of purposes and with different audiences
- avoids continual correction and interruptions that embarrass the child or intervene between the child and peers
- encourages the child's speech with positive reinforcement.

KIDS

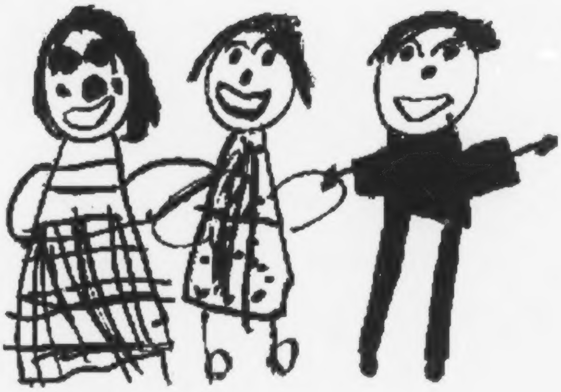
Here's to the kids who are different
The kids who don't always get "A's"
The kids who have ears
Twice the size of their peers
Or noses that go on for days.
Here's to the kids who are different,
The kids who are just out of step;
The kids they all tease,
Who have cuts on their knees
And whose sneakers are constantly wet.
Here's to the kids who are different,
The kids with a mischievous streak;
For when they have grown,
As history has shown,
It's their difference that
Makes them unique.

Author Unknown

I went camping with Mom and Dad. There were lots of mosquitoe.

CHAPTER FIVE

Partners in Learning



PARTNERS IN LEARNING

CHAPTER FIVE ... AT A GLANCE

This chapter describes the partners involved in planning and implementing an effective Kindergarten program and the home/school/community connections that are so critical to children's learning success. Information is provided on:

- teachers
- children
- teacher assistants
- parents
- support service specialists
- administrators and school authority personnel
- substitute/supply teachers
- volunteers
- support networks
- involving families and the community in the Kindergarten program
- establishing and maintaining ongoing communication with families and the community.

Stories of Practice that connect the content of this chapter with Kindergarten children, teachers and classrooms are included in Appendix B.

Self Reflection that assists teachers in reflecting on their practice and identifying areas for growth is included in Appendix C.

Teacher Ideas that provide practical and useful information and sample forms for classroom use are included in Appendix D.

PARTNERS IN THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

Many people are involved in Kindergarten programming. The nature of the partnerships established to provide effective programming will vary depending on the learning needs of the children and the setting of the Kindergarten program—a school, community facility or daycare.

TEACHERS

"A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops."
Henry Brooks Adams

The Kindergarten teacher serves many roles, requiring a variety of competencies and strategies that focus on the development of the whole child and facilitate learning. The Kindergarten teacher is one of many significant adult influences in a young child's life.

It is helpful for Kindergarten teachers to take the time to reflect thoughtfully upon their teaching practice. When teachers reflect on their teaching, they are called upon to make meaning of what they do—to think about their practice; to imagine new possibilities. The process of coming to know themselves as teachers of young children is a difficult, but worthwhile task.

The teacher's roles include:

Nurturer

- establishes an atmosphere of warmth, comfort, stability, dependability and enthusiasm in the classroom
- creates a caring and safe environment
- helps young children in the transition from home to Kindergarten and from Kindergarten to Grade 1

Observer

- is a careful and sensitive observer of young children

Participant

- is actively involved in the experiences of the children, as both a resource and a stimulus to thinking and growth
- maintains a questioning attitude and shares the challenge of learning

Facilitator

"The object of teaching a child is to enable him to get along without his teacher."
Elbert Hubbard

- acts as a guide for children as they construct their own understanding of experiences
- fosters children's interactions with other people, places and things
- asks questions to discover what children understand and to help them reach their own solutions
- helps children analyze, apply, evaluate and appreciate their learning and the learning of others
- encourages children to think and question

Learner

- is a continual learner and is knowledgeable about child development

Evaluator and Communicator

- communicates effectively and on an ongoing basis with the child and parents

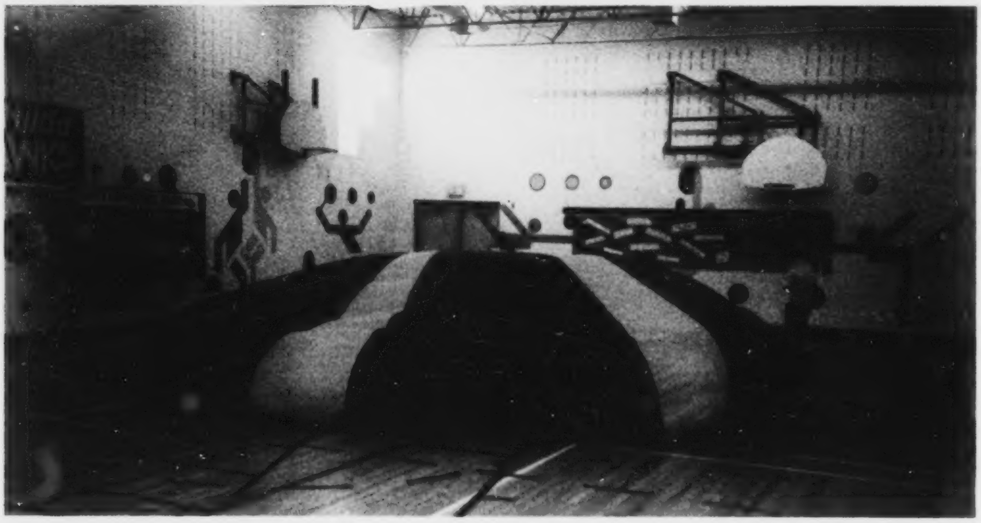
Planner and Manager

"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."
Albert Einstein

- works with all partners in learning to plan and implement a successful, child-focused program
- focuses on developmentally appropriate practice for young children and assists parents, administrators and colleagues in understanding what this means
- recognizes the value and balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities
- manages and maintains learning centres and other program materials

Role Model

- accepts and respects all children and their families regardless of cultural, physical, racial, religious and socio-economic backgrounds
- models and demonstrates enthusiasm for learning
- values and takes time for reflective practice



CHILDREN

"Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see."
Neil Postman

Although Kindergarten children may be chronologically the same age, they reflect a range of developmental levels. They each have unique strengths, talents, possibilities and needs. The Kindergarten classroom is a community of learners where, collectively, children can be encouraged to help each other learn and develop. The Kindergarten classroom is a place where children are empowered to see themselves as learners.

"The curiosity of the child is the philosophy of the man."
Horace Mann

The Kindergarten child:

- is involved in decision making
- becomes aware of available resources and uses them with respect
- develops greater independence in thinking and work habits
- is actively involved in evaluation practices
- experiences a sense of self-confidence and competence
- feels safe and secure to try things, make mistakes and still feel confident
- is free to interact with materials, peers and adults
- has opportunities to make choices and decisions about what to do, what to use and who to work with
- becomes aware of the needs of others and shows respect and a caring attitude toward others
- has opportunities for success
- influences his/her own experiences and the experiences of all others in the class
- continues to develop theories about the way the world works
- is both a learner and a teacher, an individual and a group member

TEACHER ASSISTANTS

"Nothing helps a student more than knowing someone has faith in him."
Anonymous

Working alongside teachers, teacher assistants help implement program activities in the classroom. Teacher assistants work with children under the supervision and direction of certificated teachers. It is important that teacher assistants be encouraged to have input into program plans and operations that directly affect children's learning. Teacher assistants' hours are governed by individual or district contracts.

An effective teacher assistant:

- enjoys working with young children
- has special interests, skills and expertise that enrich the learning environment
- offers complementary, supportive ways of relating to children
- is caring, consistent and contributing
- has valuable knowledge about children and their individual learning needs
- understands and strives to uphold confidentiality
- understands and is able to assist with delivery of the Kindergarten program
- is a keen and careful observer of children, and is able to communicate observations in concrete form, such as checklists, anecdotal records, IPPs
- interprets and gives meaning to events children experience in the Kindergarten environment
- is enthusiastic about learning, and proactive with own professional development
- self-reflects and assesses personal performance on a continuing basis
- builds and nurtures a positive working relationship with the teacher and other professionals as required
- contributes to the creation and maintenance of a safe, caring and positive environment in the classroom
- is an effective communicator between child and teacher, and child and parent, as required.

"Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."
Ralph Waldo Emerson

PARENTS

"Where there is love there is life ..."
Mohandas Gandhi

Responsibility for education is a shared initiative between the school and the home. Parents are their children's first teachers and continue to be ongoing teachers throughout their children's lives.

When children begin Kindergarten, parents and teachers enter into a partnership to support children's learning. For the well-being of their children, parents are encouraged to become involved in the Kindergarten experience, to the degree that both teacher and parent feel is appropriate.

Teachers can encourage, invite and, at times, assist parents to:

- be sure their child comes to school rested, fed and ready to participate
- share valuable information about their child's developmental history, current interests, fears, capabilities and needs
- suggest important educational goals and objectives for their child
- become knowledgeable about the *Kindergarten Program Statement* and give ideas or input to the program
- take an active role in the education of their child
- participate in school experiences through visiting or volunteering in the Kindergarten
- maintain an ongoing line of communication with the school
- support and encourage their child as a developing learner, both at home and at school
- serve on a parent group such as the Local Advisory Committee or School Council that provides advice and assistance on the Kindergarten program
- share expertise and skills with the class
- help organize activities or school/family functions
- assist on field trips
- prepare materials at home.

"Worlds can be found by a child and an adult bending down and looking together under the grass stems or at the skittering crabs in a tidal pool."
Mary Catherine Bateson

SUPPORT SERVICE SPECIALISTS

"NIYIMPA KOR NTSETSE BA
It takes an entire village to
raise a child."
African Proverb

Support service specialists with whom teachers may work include the school nurse, speech and hearing or language development specialist, occupational therapist, behaviour consultant, social worker, school counsellor, early literacy consultant, psychologist and special education teacher. These specialists are invaluable in their abilities to offer advice and service to the Kindergarten children, parents and teachers. They help respond to the special needs of some children.

Specialists, when necessary, may:

- be available during the initial transition to Kindergarten
- help prepare Individualized Program Plans (IPPs)
- advise the teacher, after observing a child in the classroom, on ways of meeting special needs
- provide diagnostic assistance
- work directly in the classroom
- supply special curriculum enrichment and remedial materials
- teach demonstration lessons in the classroom
- help in the selection of new instructional materials, equipment and supplies
- serve as a professional resource to other teachers.

ADMINISTRATORS

> *"If you have knowledge, let others light their candles at it."*
> Margaret Fuller-Ossoli

The school administrator, or principal, makes key administrative decisions for the school community, and also acts as a learning facilitator and resource person. In this capacity, the school principal:

- provides instructional leadership in the school
- directs the management of the school
- assists Kindergarten teachers in developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to work with young children
- provides support for teachers and ensure that instruction provided is consistent with the *Kindergarten Program Statement*
- is considerate of the unique aspects of Kindergarten programs
- promotes and assists in building home/school/community partnerships
- demonstrates a willingness to become knowledgeable about developmentally appropriate practice for young children
- responds to the needs of the Kindergarten teacher, the parent and the child
- becomes current in Early Childhood Education issues
- supports the evaluation of students and evaluate or provide for the evaluation of the Kindergarten program.

> *"Building schools and building relationships are day-to-day jobs. I see the best leaders as those who are consistent in carrying out a multitude of mundane tasks with integrity and caring."*
> Robert Deblois

Other school authority personnel, who are knowledgeable about child development and supportive of practice that is developmentally appropriate, may also lend support to the Kindergarten classroom. They can provide assistance, resources and professional development opportunities.

SUBSTITUTE/SUPPLY TEACHERS

To ensure that substitute/supply teachers can be effective in their role it is helpful to provide them with:

- day plan/timetable
- classroom routines
- class list
- current class projects
- children's medical information/allergies
- absence procedures
- supervision schedule
- name tags
- printed lyrics/words of familiar classroom songs/poems/chants
- school discipline policy
- names of staff members; e.g., administrators, secretaries, custodians
- school handbook
- fire drill procedures.

VOLUNTEERS

"Will you, won't you,
will you, won't you,
will you join the dance."
Lewis Carroll

Volunteers can make valuable contributions to the Kindergarten classroom. When made to feel welcome and needed, and with appropriate guidelines, they can allow for more individualization and provide expertise and skills in specific areas. Volunteers can help strengthen relationships between the school and community and, if the volunteer is a parent, between the school and home.

Some suggestions for volunteer activities include:

- supervising on field trips
- making support materials
- sharing special skills
- reading to individuals, small groups, classes
- listening to readers
- assisting in learning centres
- teaching new games or activities
- setting up equipment
- giving out supplies
- editing and typing stories
- publishing books
- tallying book orders
- supervising the use of a tape recorder or computer
- assisting students with recording of oral stories
- organizing class parties

- babysitting for other parents so they can volunteer
- supporting special projects and concerts
- coming for observation visits
- sharing hobbies, stories, talents, career descriptions.

It is important for teachers to ensure that they have a variety of volunteer opportunities for all parents or other helpers wishing to be involved.

DEVELOPING AND ORGANIZING A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Recruit easily and efficiently, by:

- asking a parent volunteer to organize a monthly schedule of helping parents
- personally asking a parent for specific help
- sending a newsletter home to parents/guardians
- recruiting older students within the school
- submitting an advertisement in the volunteer section of the community newspaper and in local church bulletins
- contacting teachers in charge of high school work experience programs
- looking into university or college "study buddy" or other volunteer programs.

> *"Wisdom is oftentimes nearer when we stoop than when we soar."*
> William Wordsworth

Define the role of the volunteer by.

- outlining details of the tasks a volunteer may perform as clearly and positively as possible
- ensuring that volunteers do not take on inappropriate tasks, such as evaluation or discipline.

Make volunteers feel welcome, by:

- greeting them when they enter the classroom
- being positive
- familiarizing them with school/classroom procedures
- offering a range of choices for what they might do; e.g., observing or casually interacting with children, participating in a centre, working with an individual child
- posting a list of suggested ways they can help at each centre
- selecting tasks that are appropriate to the volunteers abilities and interests
- ensuring that the class/school is safe and comfortable
- providing a place for their personal belongings
- introducing them to others and inviting them to the staff room or volunteer room

- encouraging risk taking by considering mistakes to be learning opportunities
- modelling and clearly defining your expectations
- acknowledging their contributions with thank-you notes, volunteer teas
- accepting whatever assistance they can give and whenever they can give it.

SUPPORT NETWORKS

"Other people can't make you see with their eyes. At best they can only encourage you to use your own."
Aldons Huxley

Support networks include colleagues or professional associations and organizations who help Kindergarten teachers become more knowledgeable and reflective about their students and their teaching practices.

Through talking, comparing notes, sharing ideas, asking questions and inquiring into practice, a community of educators can work together to further their insight and understanding of life in the classroom. Examples of support networks are listed below.

Team Meetings and Professional Conversations

- sharing ideas and planning with teachers in the same school who work with children at the same level
- meeting regularly to talk about daily events, future plans and to share advice

Professional Associations

- one example is the Early Childhood Education Council (ECEC)—an Alberta Teacher's Association (ATA) Specialist Council which exists to improve practice of teaching young children by increasing member's knowledge and understanding of this specialty through an annual conference, regional workshops and membership publications

Teachers as Readers Group

- reading and discussing children's books and professional resources

"To teach well is to be a lifelong student."
Johnetta Cole

University and College Personnel

- assisting, encouraging and developing the role of teacher as researcher and lifelong learner

INVOLVING FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY

"Parents remain a child's first and most impressionable teacher. No one can give or nurture love and good feelings quite like a parent can."
Anonymous

Young children begin their learning in a variety of environments—in their homes, in day care programs and in the community. Home, school and community connections are important because children's learning is a shared responsibility. Kindergarten teachers use the resources of the home and the community to enhance their programs.

Change is constant in our society. It is important to understand the changes that today's families are undergoing in order to provide them with support. Each classroom will have children from a variety of family structures and lifestyles. Many Kindergarten children live in single-parent or blended family homes. Many children are raised in homes with a variety of cultural, ethnic and lifestyle influences and values. Some children have limited experiences prior to attending school, and perhaps live in poverty. Exposure to drugs, alcohol, violence, abuse and neglect create stressful situations for children. Children arrive in Kindergarten from diverse backgrounds and with a variety of experiences. Teachers and schools need to be sensitive and responsive to changing patterns and needs of families.

"There can be no more powerful an argument in favour of parental involvement in their children's schooling than the fact that it is strongly and positively associated with children's achievement in school and attitude toward learning."
Suzanne Ziegler

For many parents their child's Kindergarten teacher may be their first contact within the school system. Some parents may be hesitant to even enter the school, let alone become involved. Cultural differences, varied backgrounds and experiences and language differences can all create barriers to involvement. Teachers need to help parents and families recognize that strong home-school connections can have a positive impact on children's learning.

Schools are part of communities. Through involving the community in classroom life, a broader support base is created for children. Community involvement has many aspects such as classroom visitors, field trips, community participation on class and school activities, information sharing through displays, newspapers and so on.

> *"Find a way to engage the heart in the problem and you are likely to see the child rise naturally to his own optimal levels of uncertainty, risk and relevance."*
> Richard Jones

RECYCLING DEPOT
ACCEPTED ITEMS
Box Board
Aluminum Cans
Tin Cans
Low Grade Paper
Newspaper
Magazines & Catalogues
Bond Paper
Containers

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Establishing and maintaining effective and ongoing communication between the school and the home or community is achieved in a variety of ways. Kindergarten teachers can:

- ensure the classroom is open and available for informal visits
- encourage parents to share information about community actions and activities with each other
- use translators when needed, for both oral and written communication
- encourage parents to be active members of the Local Advisory Committee and other school parent organizations
- encourage families and community members to participate in school-wide activities.

> *"Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another."*
> G.K. Chesterton

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHTFUL COMMUNICATION

Activity Calendars

Monthly calendars containing special event dates and details, theme or project related information and requests, and volunteer schedules help keep families informed of classroom happenings.

Book Bags/Backpacks

Children sign out bags or backpacks containing different materials and activities, based on classroom studies, to share with their families.

Booklets

Booklets share stories and experiences from the classroom with families. A class set of children's stories and drawings may be copied for each child to take home to share with family members. Lists of recommended books and activities may be included to provide parents with ideas for at-home enrichment.

Community Visits

Spending time visiting businesses and special places in the community will provide classes with a variety of enriching experiences. Community members may also be invited into classes to share their expertise and interests with the children.

Displays

Displays and photographs of classroom life in places such as school hallways, local shopping malls, community businesses, and senior citizens centres help celebrate children's learning experiences and provide information about the Kindergarten program. An album of photographs can also be made available for viewing in the classroom or hallway.

Family Evenings

Family evenings are held in many schools. They may be arranged for a variety of purposes. Families might be invited to explore aspects of the program together or to view and discuss information about curriculum. Some parents may want to learn about Canadian schools, about parenting or about each other. Others may be interested in topics such as community and street safety, summer programs, nutrition or helping children with reading.

"They know enough who know how to learn."
Henry Brooks Adams

Home Journals

Home journals enable children to share school experiences with their families and home experiences with their class. Entries may be drawn, written and/or scribed.

Letters/Notes

Letters and notes may be sent home to individual parents to celebrate a child's success, to request help with a school project or to extend thanks for assistance. Parents may also be encouraged to send letters or notes to school when necessary.

Newsletters/Newspapers

Teachers, children and volunteers can share responsibility for creating a class newsletter or for submitting classroom news into a school or community newsletter or newspaper. Items may include curriculum goals, classroom information, photographs, samples of children's artwork and writing and ideas for parents.

Open Houses

Open houses welcome families and community member into the Kindergarten classroom. Open houses often occur during Kindergarten orientation or Education Week celebrations.

Parent Centre

Books, articles and videos on children and parenting may be available for family use, along with information on community services.

> *"When I became a parent, I thought that my teaching had taught me a lot about being a good parent. I was wrong. Instead, I found that being a parent taught me a lot about being a good teacher."*
> Steve Bialostok

Telephone Conversations

Teachers and parents telephone each other, as necessary, to discuss a child's progress in school or to clarify an issue raised in a previous communication.

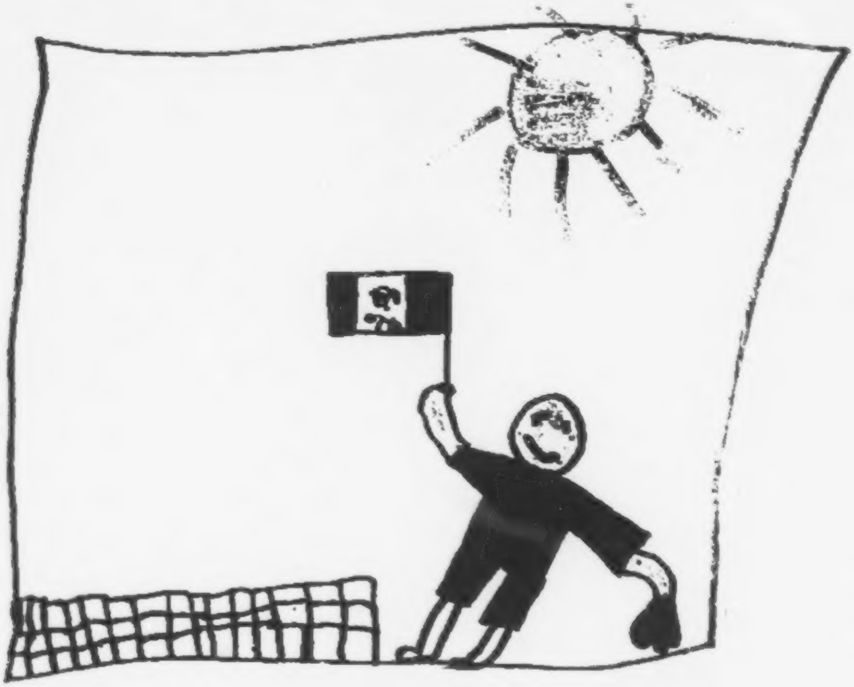
Weekly Envelope

A weekly envelope provides families with classroom and school information on a regular and predictable basis.

UNITY

I dreamed I stood in a studio
And watched two sculptors there
The clay they used was a young child's mind
And they fashioned it with care.
One was a teacher—the tools he used were books, music and art.
The other, a parent, worked with a guiding hand,
And a gentle, loving heart.
Day after day, the teacher worked with touch
That was deft and sure,
While the parent standing by his side
Polished and smoothed it o'er.
And when at last their task was done,
They were of what they had wrought,
For the things they had molded into the child
Could neither be sold nor bought.
And each agreed they would have failed
If each had worked alone,
For behind the teacher stood the school
And behind the parent, the home.

Author Unknown



FINAL REFLECTIONS

FINAL REFLECTIONS

We come to an end. But this ending is only a closing of the book, a momentary stillness, before the next beginning.

> *All around us, everywhere, beginnings and endings are going on all the time, with living in between.*
> Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen

It is the living in between that concerns us when we think about children and the curriculum. The living in classrooms with young children is an experience of laughter, tears, frustration, anger, exhaustion, and exhilaration. Looking back is not just looking, it is hearing, feeling, remembering the eyes of a child, the touch of a small hand, the smell of warm crayons and "Smelly felts." Our reflections are in our bodies, as much as about our bodies.

As you reflect on the contents of this Guide to Implementation, you may recall the look of the print, and the content. But you have also "heard" the voices of children and teachers as they lived the experiences of implementing a program, which, until they became moments of interactions in spaces called classrooms, were only text on paper. Perhaps as you read, you also recalled moments in your own classroom when you laughed with the children over a story, or a block building project, or you smiled with contented relief as you watched a child accomplish a challenging task and turn to grin at you with self-satisfaction.

Our experience of reflection is entwined with our experiences of coming face to face with a child—reaching out to a child, listening, sharing the intimacy of reading a story together, shifting position to accommodate each other. The reflection we know is not contained and framed within a mirror, to be held without moving. It escapes such confining boundaries and static structures and lives in the bodies of the children and their teachers, sustained in spaces and forms where beginnings and endings are elusive.

Our reflections are still shifting, rippling, and touching the reflections we share with others, like the ripples of pebbles dropped into a still pond. We hope that this sharing of experiences will be helpful to you as you bring the *Kindergarten Program Statement* to life in your own classroom.

"I touch the future. I teach."
Christa McAuliffe

"There are only
two lasting bequests
that we can leave to
our children;
one is roots;
the other; wings."
Anonymous

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APPENDIX A: CONTINUUM OF LEARNING

A continuum of learning is a panoramic view of children's learning based on expert knowledge, current research, observation of children, and the collective wisdom and common sense of parents and teachers. These general statements show common patterns of development that can help teachers:

- see the big picture of growth and development over time
- focus on the development of individual children
- assess individual learners and plan appropriate learning experiences to ensure continuous progress
- reassure parents about a child's ongoing development

When using each continuum of learning chart:

- look at all goal areas to gain a balanced view
- look at the age ranges on either side of the child's age to appreciate growth over time
- remember each child is an individual
- consider the experiences the home and school have provided
- recognize that, although there are developmental milestones, learning is a lifelong process.

A continuum of learning is provided for each of the six learning areas of the *Kindergarten Program Statement*. Statements for each learning area have been organized, for clarity and easy reference, according to a time frame of birth through early primary years.

For each continuum of learning, the statements and examples of children's development provide only a sample of generally observable behaviours. Readers will likely think of many other similar examples.

English Language Arts Continuum of Learning

Birth ——————————→ **Early Primary**

In **speaking**, children:

• begin to develop an understanding of language and how it works; e.g., imitating sounds, saying words, putting words together.	• begin to use language to name objects and their own direct experiences of them; e.g., "stove – hot".	• continue to expand their understanding and use of language to clarify thinking and learning.
• learn to name objects and may use the same word for two or more objects; e.g., all vehicles called "cars".	• name objects and may find that two objects are alike in some way; e.g., cats and dogs are animals.	

In **reading**, children:

• "read" pictures for meaning	• begin to develop a sense of how reading works.	• continue to develop a sense of how reading works.
	• are curious about print in own environment; e.g., names of letters, signs, labels, and logos.	• are curious about print; e.g., word forms, spellings.
	• play at reading—"read pictures"—rather than print. • begin with labelling and commenting on the pictures and move to telling stories from the pictures.	• role play themselves as readers, relying heavily on memory at first (rote reading) • begin to focus on print but use pictures to predict and confirm meaning • attempt to match voice to print.
	• "read" print in own familiar environment; e.g., favourite restaurant signs, traffic signs.	• are increasingly able to recognize environmental print away from its familiar context • begin to develop a basic vocabulary of functional and personal words recognized on sight (sight vocabulary) • read slowly and deliberately.
	• know that print is a source of information or enjoyment. • begin to develop a "sense of story."	• understand that the print "tells the story" • continue to develop a "sense of story."
	• focus on the whole story rather than individual words.	• are increasingly able to deal with the parts of print—letters and words.
	• begin to develop knowledge of some conventions of print; e.g., front-to-back directionality of books.	• increase awareness of print conventions; e.g., top-to-bottom and left-to-right directionality, punctuation. • develop knowledge of common letter-sound relationships.

Birth → **Early Primary**

	• rely on an adult or older child to read text.	• begin to develop an ability to read print, including ways to figure out unknown words; e.g., common letter-sound associations, picture clues.
	• like books with illustrations, repetition and rhyme.	• choose short books with simple stories and illustrations. • enjoy rereading favourite books.

In **writing**, children:

• begin to recognize that writing has meaning and is intended for communication.	• view writing as something that people do, so like to play at writing • are curious about letters and words.	• are interested in the names of letters and how to represent specific speech sounds • write mainly for personal interest.
• express themselves through scribbles, lines and circles.	• combine drawing and "writing", but drawing conveys most of the meaning.	• combine drawing and writing to convey ideas.
	• may write without intending a particular message, so may ask of own writing "What does this say?" • may not yet associate letters and sounds	• demonstrate increasing knowledge of letter names, common letter-sound associations – especially consonants. • demonstrate increasing knowledge of some forms of writing; e.g., labels, letters, stories.
	• play at writing and may produce: – "scribble writing" (imitative cursive writing); – strings of capital letters in random order across a page – single letters that represent a word—s for "snake"—or a syllable—d for "daddy".	• produce increasingly conventional writing as they: – write in capitals and move towards the use of lower case letters – spell with consonants and move towards phonetic spellings that include vowels – spell some common words conventionally – show some sense of directionality but may reverse some letters (b and d) or write right-to-left at times – start to use some punctuation marks, such as periods.
	• may produce some conventional words—own name, mom, dad—as well as "play writing."	• may produce: – a label or caption to accompany a drawing – single words or phrases – short, simple sentences – simple stories with one character – short letters.

Mathematics Continuum of Learning

Birth ——————————→ **Early Primary**

Children:

• likely think about time in the here and now.	• may think of tomorrow as "after my sleep" and use words like tomorrow and yesterday though not always correctly.	• begin to develop an understanding of words like tomorrow or yesterday, but may still be unsure about length of time; e.g., "Is it ready?" "Are we there yet?" • name the days of the week and the seasons of the year.
• begin to recognize groupings of one and more than one • count to nursery rhymes or the alphabet song.	• recognize perceptually and count up to five • identify fair shares informally.	• count first by starting back at "1" each time something is added • begin to pick up counting where they left off—starting with seven and counting on to eight and nine • play with counting forwards or backwards using all types of things • read and write numbers to 10 and beyond.
• begin to pick out one thing from a group, sometimes finding two or three that are the same.	• recognize and name simple shapes—squares, circles, triangles • match pictures to actual shapes • sort using a single attribute • recognize simple patterns.	• use pattern blocks and other materials to make/extend patterns, and compare with patterns seen in daily experiences in the classroom • match objects in one set to objects in a second set.
	• build 3-D objects	• identify, name and describe some shapes.
• begin to identify simple qualities of things like soft and hard or hot and cold.	• learn more qualities of objects; e.g., thick and thin • line up two or three objects using size or some other category.	• sequence things from the biggest to the smallest, by size or some other dimension (seriation) • may insert items into a sequence at the appropriate place • may enjoy lining up according to size.
• begin to get some ideas of how things are alike and how they are different.	• use language to begin to get ideas about space and time; e.g., next to, on top of, before, after • compare using objects.	• may enjoy card games that help develop mastery of the idea of numbers being larger or smaller • may classify objects in a variety of ways • may isolate a set from a collection • may realize that a collection can be sorted in more than one way.
• may follow the path of an object • may look up and down • have not yet developed concept of size.	• may use measurement words without any idea of units; e.g., big and small, short and tall, near and far.	• begin to develop a stable idea of a straight line • try measuring all sorts of things using non-standard units.

Birth → **Early Primary**

• may express amounts/ comparisons using simple words, such as "one more cookie" or "more milk."	• may recognize that two is always two and three is always three but does not apply this concept to larger numbers.	• begin to recognize that 10 is 10 or 20 is 20 no matter how objects are arranged in a group • work with simple number facts showing different sums with many types of materials.
• may be interested in grouping objects; e.g., putting all the large animals to bed and leaving the small ones to play.	• begin to develop an interest in the number of things • are increasingly interested in counting although the number may not match the number of objects.	• begin to understand that the number of objects does not change when grouped in different ways (conservation of numbers) • develop the ability to match counting 1, 2, 3 with the number of objects.

Community and Environmental Awareness Continuum of Learning

Birth ——————————▸ **Early Primary**

Children:

• physically explore the environment to the best of their abilities using their senses—seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling • are natural explorers, eager for new experiences.	• become interested in exploring the environment outside the immediate home • continue to eagerly explore the immediate world around them.	• begin to develop an interest in the community and the world at large • may begin to show an increased awareness of basic necessities—food, clothing, shelter • begin to develop an interest in specific issues pertaining to their world (recycling).
• begin to distinguish between familiar and unfamiliar faces.	• become more aware of family and social relationships.	• may begin to notice how people are similar and different from one another.
• become more aware of their own feelings and respond to others' expressions; e.g., become upset if caregiver is also upset.	• may sense another person's unhappiness, such as another child crying, and not know how to help.	• begin to develop the ability to respond sympathetically to others if they are hurt, upset or crying.
• may demonstrate visible expressions of emotions; e.g., temper tantrums.	• may display their emotions easily and appear very sensitive and impulsive; e.g., crying fits, "No!".	• may continue to show intense emotions.
• make direct contact with their environment to the best of their ability – doing, seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling, put objects in mouth.	• continue to explore the world around them by object manipulation and the direct experience of playing • begin to understand cause and effect; e.g., "I fall – I hurt – I cried.".	• continue to learn from the direct experience of playing • expand and refine knowledge with increasing understanding of cause and effect; e.g., "I can go to my friend's house if I call home when I get there.".
• are increasingly able to identify familiar faces, toys, places and activities • are developing personal choice; e.g., a favourite blanket or toy.	• may learn nursery rhymes, songs and addresses, but without really trying to remember • begin to assert personal choice in decision making; e.g., "No broccoli!".	• may begin to organize information to remember it (own telephone number, sound-symbol relations) • continue to assert personal choice in decision making; e.g., what to wear to school.
		• have theories to explain events in their lives.

Personal and Social Responsibility Continuum of Learning

Birth ——————————————————→ **Early Primary**

Children:

• actively show affection for familiar people • may show anxiety when separated from familiar people and places.	• begin to feel more comfortable when separated from familiar people, places and things; e.g., visiting a neighbour, nursery school, babysitters.	• may appear anxious once again when separated from familiar people and places; e.g., beginning school, sleepovers.
• play alone generally, and may or may not attempt to interact with others • are naturally very curious about other children and may watch and imitate them.	• may play alone or beside others but are becoming more aware of the feelings of others • may be frustrated at attempts to socialize but hold no grudges.	• begin to cooperate with others for longer periods of time • friendships may change frequently.
• begin to see themselves as people and appear self-centred • begin to see themselves as strong through directing others; e.g., "Sit down."	• see themselves as powerful and creative doers; e.g., if the child can't reach something, will get a stool.	• may see themselves as bad, good, clever, and may seem very hard on themselves.
• may become possessive of such belongings as special people, toys, special times	• may continue to appear possessive • may feel if something is shared for a brief period it is gone forever.	• become more able to develop the ability to share possessions and take turns.
• appear insensitive to the views of others, yet show interest in them.	• become more aware of others and begin to take part in social play groups • may play beside rather than with others.	• are developing the ability to take part in social play groups, and for longer periods of time, increasing awareness of others. • may prefer to play alone at times or with others.
• are generally self-centred in their views • look at the world mostly from their own viewpoint; e.g., may think the sun sets because they go to bed.	• begin to see that their views differ from those of others but remain self-centred • may show aggressive feelings towards others when something does not go their way.	• begin to develop the ability to see that others have feelings and different views than their own.
• may cry when they see or hear another child crying.	• begin to sense when another person is sad, angry, happy.	• may respond to others in times of distress if they are supported and encouraged to do so.
• begin to recognize consequences follow actions.	• become aware of consequences of own behavior.	• are more able to understand consequences of own and others' behavior.

Physical Skills and Well-being Continuum of Learning

Birth ——→ **Early Primary**

Children:

• may experience a period of extremely rapid growth • develop the ability to move about and to manipulate objects to the best of their ability.	• experience a period of rapid growth • have a slower rate of small muscle development in their hands than growth and coordination of large muscles in their legs.	• may or may not experience a slower rate of physical growth. Large muscles in their legs and arms may be more developed than small muscles in their hands and feet. • may increase fine motor skills; e.g., handling writing tools, using scissors.
• begin to follow slowly moving objects with their eyes.	• are usually naturally far-sighted.	• usually continue to show farsightedness.
• begin to develop hand-eye coordination; e.g., reaching, grasping objects, feeding, dressing.	• continue to develop hand-eye coordination and a preference for left- or right-handedness.	• develop further hand-eye coordination, perhaps still developing preference for left- or right-handedness.
• begin to recognize concepts of place and direction—up, down, in.	• begin to understand and use concepts of place and direction—up, down, under, beside.	• continue to develop an understanding of direction and place although may confuse right and left, up and down when playing games.
• begin to move about to the best of their ability; e.g., sit, stand, crawl, walk, climb stairs, walk backwards	• begin to develop the ability to climb, balance, run, gallop, jump, push and pull, and take stairs one at a time.	• continue to develop climbing, balancing, running, galloping, and jumping abilities; may be developing the coordination for skipping.
• begin to identify their own body parts, often through nursery rhymes and games.	• begin to identify body parts and words used in movement – jump, wave, hop.	• are growing in their ability to know what and where their body parts are, and how they can be moved and coordinated.
• are unaware of physical strengths and limitations so may attempt activities that could be difficult or dangerous.	• seem unaware of their own physical strengths and limitations and may try potentially difficult or dangerous activities.	• continue vigorous activity, tiring easily, recovering quickly • tire from sitting rather than running • develop, with guidance, an awareness of safety.
• may change activities often • move about, near a trusted adult, at their own pace.	• may change activities often, although sometimes concentrate on one thing for a long time if interested.	• usually show enthusiasm for most physical activities, and are sometimes called noisy or aggressive.
• are likely to play alone or beside another • begin to play games like peek-a-boo and hide-and-seek.	• begin to take part in group situations, but still play side-by-side rather than with others • may invent their own games and change the roles to suit needs.	• begin to develop the ability to take part in small group games, and usually begin to play in groups of children of same sex.

Birth → **Early Primary**

Children:

- strive toward independence with support and affection; e.g., sitting up, crawling, walking, dressing, feeding, toileting.

- begin to assert independence by saying things like "No" or "I can do it myself!"

- continue to develop feelings of independence by doing certain things on their own; e.g., getting dressed or combing hair
- recognize that some substances may be harmful; e.g., household products, drugs
- make healthy food choices—understand the difference between junk food and healthy food—and make a simple healthy breakfast
- observe safety rules when crossing the street.

Creative and Cultural Expression Continuum of Learning

Birth ——————→ **Early Primary**

Children:

• may try to grasp writing tools with whole hand.	• may learn to hold writing tools between fingers and thumb.	• continue to develop the ability to hold and use a variety of writing and drawing tools.
• may draw randomly and look away while drawing or making marks on a paper or board • may begin to make scribbles for pleasure of seeing the results of their actions • use scribbles, lines and circles for expression.	• may make marks, draw, paint and build spontaneously to express self • may begin to name a person, place, thing or an action in a drawing • gradually try making lines and circles repeatedly and with more control.	• may show first attempts at drawing, painting and building things • continue to name what has been drawn, painted or constructed • may strive for more detail and realism in artwork • gradually include more detail and add more body parts when drawing people.
• may begin to express pleasure or displeasure—laughing, anxiety—when listening to sounds, voices and music.	• may respond to music, art, nature through rhythmic body movement, such as rocking, clapping, jumping or shaking.	• continue to expand and refine responses to a variety of sounds, voices and music.
• may begin to move body to sounds and music • may make sounds to music without using words—"la, la," "ba,ba"—and may enjoy hearing own sounds.	• use movements that are generally spontaneous, unrehearsed and inventive • may be relatively uninhibited about singing and playing musical instruments • may use both a speaking voice and a singing voice when singing alone, with a tape or with others; and may or may not be able to sing a melody in tune.	• may show imaginative and creative ways of moving and dancing • are increasingly able to initiate and repeat movement patterns; e.g., walk like a lion, slither like a snake • may engage in acting out stories spontaneously • often continue to be relatively uninhibited about singing and playing musical instruments • begin to develop a singing voice but the range will differ; may or may not be able to sing a melody in tune.
• may enjoy pretend games • may look at, talk/babble to, grasp, bang or drop toys.	• often engage in pretend play easily and naturally • may talk to and play with pretend friends, television characters, stuffed and other toys.	• often continue to show lots of imagination and interest in make-believe • continue to talk to imaginary friends and may greet an imaginary friend or call someone with a striking sense of reality.

Birth → **Early Primary**

Children:

• may begin to develop an awareness of their physical characteristics and gender • may believe they can change their gender identification, skin and eye colour through role play	• may name and describe their physical characteristics, gender and race/ethnicity • may remain egocentric but begin to see themselves as part of their larger family.	• develop a strong sense of who they are based on gender and race/ethnicity • may see themselves and their families as part of a racial or ethnic group.
• may begin to develop a background for later understanding of behaviours and images that are fair or unfair.	• may begin to understand that teasing hurts and, as a result, make the choice not to tease.	• may begin to use problem-solving skills regarding teasing in their everyday life.

APPENDIX B: STORIES OF PRACTICE

The Stories of Practice present different perspectives and possibilities and connect the content of Chapters Two through Five with Kindergarten children, teachers and classrooms.

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Kindergarten: The Heart of the School

Sue McKenzie-Robblee

Kindergarten classrooms have always been magical places for me. They are places where children and learning go hand in hand, happily moving from experience to experience. A place where there is laughter and excited conversation as children bubble with the joy of telling stories to their teacher and classmates. Children's natural love for learning, their curiosity and wonder are the tools they use to make new meaning of the world around them.

There is always something new and important happening in Kindergarten. This dynamic place is the lifeline to everything else that happens within the school. In fact, Kindergarten sets the patterns and the foundations that children need to develop into capable, confident, creative and successful lifelong learners.

Together, teachers and children create an environment where learning flourishes. We create the magical atmosphere that infuses the organization and planning of the Kindergarten program with life. Children define their world as they develop relationships with people, and explore ideas and values within the context of school. Their knowledge, their experience and their imagination are played out in this magical place—the Kindergarten classroom.

In this place, we nurture the intelligence of children. We allow every child to find the ways in which they are intelligent and successful. At the same time, we expose them to new wonders, expanding the richness and boundaries of their world.

Excellent Kindergarten programs establish attitudes about learning to learn, effective leadership, teamwork, motivation, creative thinking, listening, speaking, reading and writing. The Kindergarten classroom offers daily opportunities for children and teachers to experience, practise, and display these skills, their learning and knowledge. These are the attributes we need to make meaningful contributions to the world. These are also the attributes that the Conference Board of Canada states are the necessary workplace skills for the future.

The learning-centered classroom creates a deeper understanding that comes about only through concrete experience, conversation, reflection, questioning, and investigating.

Kindergarten programs, the support and encouragement of parents, plus a wide variety of complementary activities, all work together to create a foundation on which the future success for each child is built.

In the Kindergarten classroom, there is more happening than the eye can see. There is laughter and singing. There are wonderful displays of learning as children strive to make meaningful contributions to their world. The children's smiling faces and warm hugs, however, are the reminders that we hold in our hands a precious resource. A resource that we treat with respect and dignity by ensuring that this magical place at the heart of our school provides the foundation for these young learners as they journey to become all that they can be.

May I Show and Share Too? *A Story of Community*

Karen Gwozd-Cornish

This is a story of Mattie, who one day shared a little of herself and gave me great insight into the importance of relationships.

Almost all children want to share their stories. They want to be heard. "Show and Tell," "Sharing Time," or "Bring and Brag Day," are well loved times when children have the attention of their classmates and can present something of importance to them. For children, it is one of those "famous" moments when they can learn about each other. As a teacher, I learn a lot, too.

Mattie was a frail looking little girl whose life was full of tragedy and difficulty. Mattie had no mother or siblings at home, and her father was struggling with life's problems. Knowing some of this, I understood why she often wanted to stay close to me or come over and ask what I was doing rather than join others in play. I spent a lot of time with Mattie and was concerned about her tendency to avoid interaction with others. Although Mattie was comfortable with me, I was never quite sure how the other children perceived her.

One Wednesday afternoon, my class began preparing for "Show and Share." The students hurried to gather their treasures and return to the carpet area of the classroom, where they sat eagerly awaiting their turn. Each seemed ready to talk about a special momento. It was a time to feel important.

Typically, some of the children in the class would forget to bring an item to share. As a result, they would scramble to find something, anything, that would allow them to have a turn to be heard. On this day Mattie was doing just that. As I watched the other children returning to the carpet area, I also noticed Mattie panicking as she approached her locker to find it totally empty. She had nothing to share.

I felt panic as I, too, scrambled to find something I could offer Mattie to "Show and Share." Yet, as I approached her to offer something from my desk, her eye caught a little yellow piece of paper on the floor. Mattie quickly picked it up. I walked over to offer Mattie my item. She glanced at it and quietly told me, while clutching the scrap, that she already had something. My heart sank. How would her classmates react to this well-worn tab of paper? I realized I would simply have to sit and wait. In my mind I prepared to intervene should anyone snicker or belittle Mattie or her item.

Soon it was Mattie's turn to sit in front of her classmates and share with them. As she made herself comfortable, I became uncomfortable and prepared for the worst.

Mattie described the paper. She said it was something someone gave her and that she was going to use it as a book mark. The children watched as she passed it from her left hand to her right and back again. Soon Mattie did as all the other children did. She asked if there were any questions. To my surprise, there were. The other children asked where she got it from, and how old it was and if she was going to decorate it. The paper was made important by Mattie and her classmates sensed that. It was Mattie's show and share, and because she thought it was meaningful, so did the rest of the class.

I realize now what Mattie's story was saying to me. I tried to protect her because I did not trust in the relationships that had developed within the class. Although her story was in part a fabrication compiled in haste, it was all hers and she was not about to let me spoil it. On that Wednesday there was a lot of sharing going on. Mattie reaffirmed for me the need to foster trust and relationships and she definitely shared more than a tiny piece of paper.

Setting Up My Classroom

Carol Vaage

I remember walking into the empty room—empty except for tables and chairs, a desk, some shelving, and a cupboard with miscellaneous materials. It was so hard to picture how to change this stark environment into a place that would motivate children to be active learners. I have since learned to view the room from the height of a five-year-old and to construct the room from centre to centre, rather than try to do it "all at once". Here are some of the ways I turn that empty room into a classroom.

My first step is to study the room's possibilities—traffic flow, sinks, bathroom, water fountains, outlets, flooring, wall space, storage space and lighting. Some obvious centre areas begin to emerge: water table by the water source/drain; sand tables and art areas on linoleum rather than on carpet. Water and sand toys can be stored in large plastic storage tubs nearby. Art supplies need good shelving and stacking tubs or trays to contain the variety of materials needed.

Next, I think about a group gathering place, as it requires a large, uncluttered space for children to sit, usually on carpet. It helps to have natural lighting near this area to enhance book illustrations and observe the outside world. Pillows and stuffed toys help make this a soft area for reading and relaxation. To define this space from the rest of the classroom, I border it with benches, cushions, chart stands, tables or shelving units to hold literature and music resources.

The next two areas I set up, frequently as neighbouring centres, are the play house and block corner. These are popular areas that need enough space to accommodate at least six children simultaneously. The house area needs everything to help build realistic play: dress up clothes for both boys and girls, purses, shoes, hats; play dishes, cutlery, saucepans; dolls, clothing, food; and furniture, such as table, fridge, stove, sink and cupboards. The block corner holds the large hollow blocks (stacked on the floor or on shelves), unit blocks, and miscellaneous small block sets. Accessories to stimulate complex play are placed on bordering shelving. Theme or project tubs encourage intense play. I keep large prop toys here as well.

Table surfaces are needed for the children to work at, so I count at least one space for each child in one program. The arrangements can vary to adapt to other space requirements. I've found it beneficial to have the tables inside a space surrounded by shelving full of mathematics manipulatives, writing implements and paper, games and puzzles. With the tables near the shelving, it is easier to set up and clean up.

Other centres, such as woodworking, puppet, music, doll house, listening, computer, and display area, do not require such large spaces, so I work them in after the large spaces have been defined.

To prevent children from running, I try not to leave a long clear path from one end of the room to the other. A table, shelving unit, display, pet centre, house wall or book rack all make perfect barriers, and children tend to move more slowly. If I limit a popular area or activity to one or two children, the others will hover near by to watch or anxiously wait for their turn; competitive, territorial, aggressive, and manipulative behaviours can surface. Instead, I plan to have enough space for up to six children at any one centre at one time. When I buy materials, I plan on having enough for all the children to experience and enjoy. For example, I bought a variety of plastic beads and set them on one table, thinking that a few children might like to make patterned jewellery. Well, almost everyone in the class wanted to make some, so I filled more plastic tubs with the beads, and spread them to other tables.

Part of the room set-up is planning to have needed resources readily accessible. Every Kindergarten room has a start-up budget to purchase the main furniture, such as play house, and sand table, and water table, as well as other standard materials, such as blocks, cars, dolls, scissors, games, etc. Resource catalogues give me wonderful ideas and I can purchase directly or improvise. I have saved a lot of money by going to garage sales in the summer.

Some materials are consumed with regularity in the Kindergarten room. Parents are often willing to save and share cardboard tubes, old keys and baby food jars. I have a plan for storing these before I ask for them! Clear jars (plastic is better), stacking tubs, bins or drawers all work well. A file box is often the best storage container for such materials as fabric, styrofoam chips, wire, flowers, wool, stuffing, pine cones, and paper towel tubes.

Certain topics surface often. A prop box holds the materials I collect for these times. Insects, dinosaurs, birds, trees, holidays, animals, winter, pond life, moon/sun/stars, weather, construction, homes, castles, sea, reptiles, animals, farm, planting, store, hospital, travel and rocks are some of the most common interests of young children.

I store materials that are of interest throughout the year in plastic tubs placed on the shelving units. Tubs are useful for block accessories such as cars, building blocks, wild animals, farm animals, dinosaurs, rocks, or small blocks. The mathematics centre has tubs/jars of manipulative materials: linking cubes, bottle caps, stacking blocks, small animals, marker lids, bottle caps, erasers and a variety of found or purchased treasures. The writing centre has stacks of invoice paper, receipt books, old cheque books, pads of lined and unlined paper, envelopes, old cards, card paper, scented markers, fine markers, regular pencils, crayons, pencil crayons, letter shapes of wood, plastic or felt.

When adding resources, I think of the visual element for learning as well. Children at this age love to study pictures. My best source for incredible pictures is a calendar. When we are studying flowers but can't bring in the flowers to the classroom, the next best thing is large, colourful pictures of flowers. At the end of January, calendars are incredible bargains. I laminate the pictures I use in my classroom so that children's labels can be taped on them over and over. To encourage understanding of the entire world, I choose inclusive pictures showing people from various backgrounds and occupations.

Most materials in the Kindergarten classroom are communal property, because sharing is one of the most basic learnings of the program. Markers, pencils, scissors and glue sticks can be stored in small rectangular plastic tubs that can be stacked or arranged with ease. Consistency in shape and size of these tubs makes their appearance tidy and organized, as well as facilitating clean-up. Individual journals or scrapbooks are well-labelled and stored together on shelving.

Environmental concerns begin with an introduction to communal recycling. Children quickly acquire the habits of recycling, reusing and reducing when there is space prepared for this. A simple garbage bin labelled "RECYCLE" is an easy first step. Tubs for plastics, metals and glass come next.

The artistic finishing touches to the classroom help to make it inviting and organized. Bulletin boards display children's art works, drawings, projects and photographs. Using fabric, paper or wall paper to create a colourful backdrop, I encourage children to assist with the displays. I collect coloured fabric of varying textures for aesthetically appealing table displays.

Parents appreciate efforts to communicate what is happening in their child's school world. Getting the mail home with a child is a key to this communication. Mailboxes by the entrance door, labelled with each child's name, encourage children and parents to check daily for notes or letters. A parent display board helps parents remember dates, projects, snacks or celebrations. Information about issues or events for parents is also appreciated. A bookshelf for parents' resources and a gathering area for them helps bridge the gap from home to school. The Kindergarten classroom is the first one most parents see. Much of the school's public image is formed right at the Kindergarten door.

The Kindergarten classroom takes on its own style from the styles and personalities of teachers, parents and children. Every year, my classroom is arranged differently, acquires new materials, and adjusts its spaces to the changing nature of the community of learners. The classroom takes on its own identity when I set it up for active learning.

Managing Learning Centres

Niki Bastiaan

During my 10 years as a Kindergarten teacher, I have approached learning centres in a various ways. No matter how I organize them, learning centres are an integral part of my Kindergarten program.

Each day, children approach centres with enthusiasm. If we miss our centre time because of a field trip, they are invariably disappointed! We usually spend 45 minutes to one hour in centres. At the beginning of the year, children often visit several different centres in that time. Later in the year, as their attention span increases, they may spend more time at fewer centres or even all their time at one.

To begin the school year, I start with about 6 areas, depending on the size of the classroom and the number of children. This enables children to learn the basics and the routines. It also helps at cleanup time. On the first few days of school, I tour the children through the centres so that we can brainstorm ways to use the materials. We quickly agree on appropriate behaviour for each centre; e.g., "Don't eat the crayons!"

We allow for a sharing time each day after centres. I randomly divide the class into five groups according to the days of the week. I put their names on a colour-coded card on the wall, with a shape to identify their group; e.g., Monday names are in purple, with a star. Individually, the children share what they have made at centres, while the rest of the class listens. No one is required to share unless they would like to. This optional sharing time encourages language development and builds confidence and self-esteem. The children really enjoy talking about what they have created.

As the year progresses, I rotate the centres. When a new centre opens up, we talk about it as a class and discuss what we can do there. I gather ideas for new centres directly from the children. Together, we add materials to extend their learning. Changing the colour of the water in the water table encourages children to talk about mixing colours and predicting outcomes. Comparing objects floating or sinking may be followed up with a graph of the results.

It is important to establish a routine at the start of the year and to introduce changes gradually. Centres are a daily component in my program. They allow children to learn through an activity-based, multisensory approach. Centres provide opportunities for social interaction, creative development, speech and language development, physical (fine motor and gross motor) development and cognitive development.

Playing in the Blocks, Again?

Elizabeth Munroe

When my son was in Kindergarten (10 years ago), he wanted to play in the block centre every day. He and his friends loved constructing elaborate set-ups with the large hollow blocks and the wooden train pieces and tracks. They didn't tire of the materials because the moment by moment dramas they created were always variations on their current interests.

I became quite worried that my son's Kindergarten experience was too narrow. I tried to convince him to try the other centres and activities that were available to him. Unfortunately, my focus on where my son played during centre time took precedence in our conversations when I picked him up from school. I didn't casually ask, "How was your day?" Rather I demanded, "What centre did you choose today?" When I spoke with my son's teacher, she reassured me of the value of his ongoing play in the block centre. Finally, realizing the additional stress I was causing, I let the matter drop.

It wasn't until several years later, when I studied the theory that supports a play-based early childhood curriculum, that I began to understand why it doesn't matter which centre a Kindergarten child chooses. When we analyze what children do at each centre and consider what they might be learning, we discover that very different centres may offer amazingly similar learning opportunities. Children interact with one another and develop social skills. Children manipulate materials and develop fine and gross motor skills. Children express ideas, solve problems, and develop intellectual and creative skills. Children make choices, experience success and develop emotionally.

I now firmly believe that it is not necessary for Kindergarten children to play at a different centre each day. Nor do I believe that they should be forced to spend time at each centre offered in the classroom. Learning theory—and my own son—have taught me the importance of having opportunities to elaborate on play scripts and to replay to develop expertise.

Does this mean that I do not monitor where the children play and what they do, or worry about offering a variety of play opportunities, with changing materials? No! There are many issues still to consider. I want to offer new experiences to Kindergarten children, while respecting their comfort zones. So on some days I encourage individuals to try something different with different children. I continually bring in new and enticing materials, to ensure that play is complex and developing, rather than stagnant and repetitive. I observe the play and offer suggestions or introduce different materials when appropriate. To allow each child a chance to play at each centre, I am careful that one group of children does not monopolize a centre.

Playing at the blocks again, son? That's fine, as long as you are secure, developing ideas and skills, enthralled, growing, challenged and happy. Thank goodness your teacher understood this, so that your Kindergarten experience was a positive one we both look back upon with fond memories!

Full-Day Kindergarten Programs

Dianne Nettleton

Full-day Kindergarten programs in our rural area were a response to transportation concerns raised by parents living on acreages and farms. School divisions provided morning and after-school bussing to Kindergarten children, but made no provision for midday transportation needs arising from half-day programs. This situation led parents to request full-day Kindergartens.

In my experience, once a full-day Kindergarten is in place, parents choose to continue the full-day program. The reasons are varied. While transportation is mentioned, parents also cite additional factors—day care arrangements and the ability to book enrichment activities, such as gymnastics, music or sports on the nonschool days. These factors also determine the model for the full-day program. Two models are offered. One runs on a six-day cycle in which one class comes to school Monday, Wednesday and Friday one week and Tuesday and Thursday the next. The cycle is then repeated. The other model is a two-day a week schedule, with one class attending every Tuesday and Thursday and the other class attending every Wednesday and Friday. In this format, the occasional Monday has to be included to make up the required number of hours. I usually do this by scheduling field trips on Mondays and combining the two classes for those days.

The educational pros and cons of a full-day Kindergarten program are strongly voiced by their supporters. The cons are what one might expect. The day is very long and, while most children adjust within a month or two, it is difficult for some. When rest time, outdoor recess and snacks must be factored into the daily timetable, instruction time is reduced. Balancing the day between active and nonactive times becomes vital in these programs. If parents choose the two-day-a-week model, there is the additional problem of lack of continuity. It is a long time between the Friday of one week and the following Wednesday. If the Friday happens to be a holiday, then it becomes a full week between classes. The pros of full-day Kindergartens include the ability to create a relaxed classroom atmosphere, the increased time to finish activities, and the increased flexibility to incorporate ideas and interests that arise in class. There is also additional time to spend with children who need extra practice or attention in specific areas. Rest periods become a time of music enrichment. The year I introduced classical music, it was not uncommon to see little arms swaying softly through the air in time with the music.

No Kindergarten program could operate without the support of parents. In a full-day program this is doubly true. Not only do parents assist in the classroom, but they are necessary for noon hour supervision. The ambiguity caused by a constant rotation of parents, each with their own views and values, can be reduced by printing a parents' guidebook which is distributed on registration night. In it are the school and classroom rules and routines children are expected to follow, a list of parental duties and suggestions for handling problems that may arise.

Planning for My Kindergarten Program

Carol Vaage

Twenty-five youngsters are anxiously waiting to start Kindergarten! They are keen, eager, excited and ready. When I think of their diverse personalities, life experiences, interests, family situations, and abilities, it can seem almost overwhelming to begin planning a program that meets their needs and pleases everyone. There are four basic interests to keep in balance: that children will like the topics, that I (the teacher) can support language, emotional and social development, that parents will see the substance and learning potential, and that specific learner expectations from the curriculum will be addressed.

When school starts in the fall, my first priority is to get to know the children and their interests. Home visits, informal chats with parents during school visits, and small group entrance activities help me identify three or four threads of interest from the children. Then I begin to plan for these topics.

My first step in planning is to brainstorm the topic—connecting the children's experiences with real world scenarios and possibilities for learning. I then research the topic, going through my own resources and those of the library. Nonfiction books prompt creative ideas and possibilities, fiction rounds out the context and roles, teacher resource books give ideas for techniques and activities, and audiovisual materials can introduce, expand or culminate. The nonfiction provides excellent grounding information, but the text is often compact and complex. So I often retell the information in such a way that the class can integrate new knowledge with previous learning. The cut/paste/pattern activities of teacher resource books often limit creativity, or downplay the skill level and engagement of children. Instead of an octopus with a cut out body and eight pipe cleaner arms, I bring out tissue paper, plastic streamers, the container with eyes, pipe cleaners, ribbon, crepe paper, egg cartons, and paper bags, and let the children choose which materials they would like to use for their octopus.

After I find the ideas and gather the resources, the next step is to organize them for my schedule and my classroom. I think of all the centres, curriculum topics and developmental areas. I plan for an introductory focus, the progression of learning and possible culmination activities. I prepare for flexibility in the planning, because children may not necessarily move in the linear sequence I have prepared. For example, the octopus may become an interest when I've read the story of the sea star. It makes more sense to do the octopus art, music and poem when the interest is high, rather than wait until the date I had planned. The best learning can occur in the teachable moment. With good planning and preparation, it is very easy to adapt, respond and extend the learning, following the lead of the children.

Planning also involves maintaining the interest of the children. I observe their interaction with the materials and add, remove or change materials to keep stimulation and curiosity fresh. I provide additional information, depth and meaning when play becomes stale or redundant. I give time for ideas to grow. Children need repetition and time to integrate concepts and ideas.

Any topic selected for development may interest the majority, a few, or only one or two children. Often, when I have brought out materials in response to one child's interest, other children have become curious about the topic as well, and the unit has extended and expanded. We can have the whole classroom become an "Under the Sea" school, or it can be one corner. Some topics may extend for months, some for a few days.

When a topic is finished, I find it worthwhile to take a few hours to collect the resources into a unit resource. I keep copies of background information; make lists of suggested activities for centres, curricular subjects and developmental areas; and collect songs, poems and pattern stories. For music, I write the title and source. I make a bibliography of fiction, nonfiction, and audiovisual materials (by name, author and ISBN number) and music titles and sources. These can be filed by topic. Collected pictures, borders and display titles can be laminated for long-term use. A prop box may be useful for the hands-on materials. If I have an "Under the Sea" prop box, and I can add a model ship, shells, sea star and fishing net as I pick them up. This practice is good planning for the years to come.

The Road to Reading

Susan Bell

The road to reading is a gradual learning adventure that starts with language experiences in infancy. The baby who learns lullabies and nursery rhymes and participates in babbling conversations with a loving parent is developing the language needed to interact with print.

Parents who share stories with babies establish a bond, not only between parent and child, but also between the child and literature. The bedtime story ritual makes the young child familiar with book language. Some stories become favourites and often a child will memorize a story through frequent rereadings.

Parents also have opportunities to acquaint their children with the many uses of print in the everyday world. Newspapers and magazines may be brought into the home for information and enjoyment. Parents show children how to use print in a variety of daily events, and sometimes children can share in these print experiences. Letters are written and mailed or received and read. Bills are paid by writing cheques or filling out a form. Shopping lists are compiled and taken to the store. Parents help children to use the environmental print all around them, by drawing attention to the print and reading it.

Most of all, parents provide children with an adult model of literacy. Parents who read and write in their everyday lives give children the expectation and the motivation to become literate. The road to reading begins at home.

When children enter Kindergarten, their literacy learning intensifies. For the child who has experienced reading stories and information in print at home, the transition to literacy learning at school is a natural one. Such children have a great advantage.

Reading aloud is as important in Kindergarten as it is at home. Teachers who read aloud are modelling fluent reading and giving children the sense of what reading sounds like. Each of the read-aloud sessions encourages the young child to become a reader in order to experience the wonders of books independently.

The Kindergarten teacher creates many opportunities for children to participate in reading. Shared reading is usually done with print large enough for the whole class or a small group of children to see. Big books and poems or songs written on large chart paper provide print for shared reading activities. Stories with patterns or repeated chants, and poetry and songs with rhythmic language and refrains are favourites for shared reading. Active participation and memorization through frequent repetition are results of shared reading. The teacher has many chances to demonstrate the directional rules of print and to draw attention to letters and words.

Personal reading is another opportunity for literacy in Kindergarten. Often a young child will choose to read independently a story that has been read aloud or chosen for shared reading. This independent reading may be a memorization or a retelling. It is an important step in a child's development as a reader.

Writing and reading are connected; learning in one area enhances learning in the other. Every day in Kindergarten the teacher models writing and conventions that govern print. The young child learns how oral language is turned into print by watching and listening as the teacher writes class news, notes to the office, or stories the children create.

Children may copy words, phrases and even whole sentences. The ultimate goal is for children to see themselves as writers and begin to write on their own. Initial independent writing is far from conventional print form. Often the spelling has an "invented" quality. The road to writing is underway and literacy has begun.

Weaving Story Elements with Felt: A Tale of Oral Language Enhancement

Cindy Delcioppo
Debra Martin
Jessica Martin

Once upon a time, not so long ago, in a magical place known as Children's Garden, there lived a yarn spinner. She would spin yarns of mystery, of hope, of courage and of humour, and weave them into the most wonderful stories. Children from homelands near and far would come to gaze upon and listen to her enchanting tales.

The yarn spinner had learned to weave stories from her mother, who had learned from her mother. As a matter of fact, she came from a long line of story weavers. But alas, there were no story weavers to carry the skill to the neighbouring gradelands. The tradition of story weaving would continue only if she taught the homeland children to weave their own stories.

Late one night, as the evening moon cast a magical glow, the yarn spinner sat weaving with felt and she became inspired. A smile slowly illuminated her face. She knew the youngsters entering the Children's Garden usually had little story telling experience and would often tell stories by linking long strings of events together with endings that had little to do with the beginning. She remembered her mother calling these unfocused chains. The yarn spinner knew she had to teach the children about the five elements that all true narratives are made of: setting, character, problem, events and solutions. But how to teach that? . . . hmmm.

Years of experience had taught the weaver that children learned best by actually handling the story pieces and repeating the story over and over. She also knew that in order for children to weave their own stories, they would need to develop an awareness of the story parts, especially problem and solution and how these two elements were related. It would seem that by having the children physically and verbally manipulate the elements, they would come to understand each one and how they worked together to make a story, much as the parts of the yarn spinner's loom worked together to weave her tales. The action served as a key to unlock the abstraction.

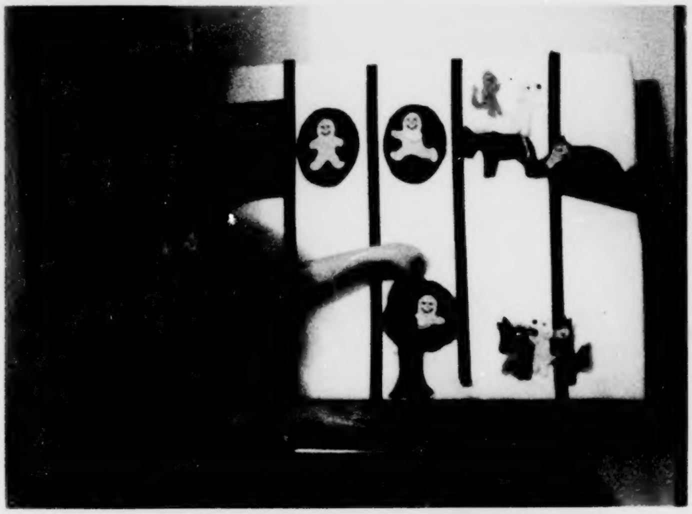
And so the yarn spinner set to work. Whir, whir went her wheel; click-clack, click-clack went the loom. At last she was finished and before her, fashioned from brightly coloured felt, lay the pieces she would use to tell her tale, each one representing a story component. As the morning sun awoke in the sleepy valley of Children's Garden, the yarn spinner made her final preparations. She divided her board of felt into five columns with tape. Each column would act as a sequential marker for the story elements. Then she stepped outside, cupped her hand alongside her mouth, and sang out: *Come, come from every homeland and hear my tale of the Gingerbread Man.*

The children quickly gathered in front of her felt board, for they loved the tales the yarn spinner wove. The wide-eyed children's imaginations soared as she told her story of the little cookie who taunted animals and then ran away. One little lad in the front row timidly asked, "More?" The story weaver smiled, for this was her plan, and she said to the children, "Let's make a change. This time our Gingerbread Man isn't going to run. He'll hide." And so the yarn spinner retold her tale with the new problem, using the new felt pieces, cloze tasks and questions to help the children describe new events and a related solution.

And when she was done, the little lad in the front row pleaded again, "More?" So once again, they told the tale. This time the children, using the previous pattern, decided the Gingerbread Man would climb. Following the children's ideas, the story weaver quickly drew new story pieces on paper for the story elements of problem, events and solution. The children's faces shone with pride as they told their story together. Whir, whir went their wheels; click-clack, click-clack went their looms.

As the yarn spinner watched the children working, she thought about a wise Elder who had taught her that the best way to teach children is to have them observe, then partially participate, then rehearse and finally perform independently. She knew that the homeland children were ready to weave their own stories. And so she put them in groups, gave them their own felt and set them to work weaving their own tales of the Gingerbread Man. As each group began to weave, she reminded them to change the endings so their stories made sense. When the children had finished, they retold their tales to each other and she recorded the stories so she could listen to them later. The yarn spinner looked around and smiled. The art of story weaving was not lost. The homeland children would grow to spin their own tales, each one fashioning a unique tapestry of mystery, hope, courage and humour. Whir, whir went their wheels; click-clack, click-clack went their looms.

Elements	***Setting***	***Character***	***Problem***	***Events***	***Solution***
STORY 1 RUNNING					
Felt pieces	A country scene	Gingerbread Man	Gingerbread Man running away	cat, dog, and horse	a fox in a river
STORY 2 HIDING					
Felt pieces	A country scene	Gingerbread Man	Gingerbread Man hiding in a tree	cat, dog, and horse	dog, cat, horse, and fox together looking
STORY 3 CLIMBING (or another verb provided by children)					
Felt pieces	A country scene	Gingerbread Man	Gingerbread Man (climbing)	cat, dog, and horse (jumping)	fox (chopping tree)



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Using Computers with Kindergarten Children

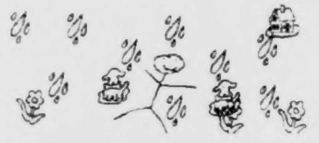
Norma O'Connor

Young children are not usually intimidated by computers. Most are very eager to learn and quick to pick up what they are shown. Through experience, I have developed some strategies that work well with my Kindergarten classes.

Advance preparations help both the children and me. Before the children come to school, I put adhesive dots of the same colour on the enter/return keys of each computer. I make sure that I know the program(s) that I want the children to use. For the first few times we use computers, I have the program ready to run before we go to the computer lab. I also have someone shut down the computers when we are finished.

Once we are in the computer lab, the children work in pairs initially and then individually. I use a special signal so I can get the children's attention: a resonating bell, patterned clapping, or hand in the air. In showing the children how to use the mouse, I demonstrate where the cord comes out, how to position their hand and fingers to hold the mouse, and how the pointer finger clicks the mouse. I also show them how, when the mouse button is clicked and held down, the cursor moves on the screen. Finally, I demonstrate how moving the mouse on the mouse pad moves the cursor on the screen. I hold the mouse pad and mouse up next to the monitor to show this.

Each time we work on the computers, I first have the children sit down in front of one computer so I can demonstrate the task for that day. I try to show the children one new thing about the program we are working on each day. This keeps interest high and the children eager. Often it is necessary to have the children stop working at their computers and regroup in front of one computer so I can show them the next step. Children do not have to be able to read to use the computer. They can press the mouse button, count to a certain place and find the item in the menu bar that starts with a certain letter, then lift the mouse button. As the children become proficient in using the mouse, I teach them to turn on and shut down the computers. Most importantly, the children are on the computers to learn and have fun!



I like green rain. I like it
when my dog Spike and I play in
the rain.
By Alex

Technology in Kindergarten

Cheryl A.R. Dragon

Technology in Kindergarten introduces children to learning in an interactive, enjoyable and informative way.

Using a CD-ROM program and a computer, children have the opportunity to enhance their early literacy skills. They are exposed to literature in several different ways. They hear a story read to them. The stories are presented to the students on brightly coloured pages and they often have catchy tunes and music to accompany the text. Children are very keen to see the next story and to have it read to them. They see the story unfold through the colours and shapes before their eyes. They can read the story of their choice and have it taped and played back. They are able to listen to what they have read and they are amazed.

Once children learn the skills they need to operate the computer, it opens up many choices for their learning. They can have a story read to them daily. They can decide which story to read. They can choose the words they want to add to a list of words they will use in their story writing. They are able to highlight and hear unfamiliar words, and then learn those words in context. Children are able to change the original story and make it entirely their own. The computer then reads their story to them. Children are also able to make a hard copy of their work to share with their families at home.

Recently, Bret joined my class. His exposure to computers was very limited. In class we introduced a story about pizza from the software program. Each child received a personal copy of the story. We practise the story first in class before we send it home for the children to read. Bret asked each day, for three days in a row, "Can I take my book home now?" Finally, on the third day, because he was so enthusiastic, I said, "Yes!" He gave me a beaming smile. Next he asked for his turn on the computer. He was so excited. He asked how to work the computer, and I showed him how in a few easy instructions. Then away he went. He read his pizza story first and then quickly asked if he could read another. I told him to go ahead, and then he listened to his second choice of stories. Bret was very excited about his new found ability to use the computer.

After observing Bret's enthusiasm, I now know why the use of technology in Kindergarten is so important to beginning literacy. It allows children the freedom to choose a story to be read to them independently. It teaches them words and it shows them pictures. It teaches them to read from left to right and how to turn the pages. It also teaches them about the author and the illustrator of the book.

A parent from my class approached me the other day and said, "This computer program is excellent. However, I'm not sure if I should be happy or sad." I asked her why. She replied, "Well normally I read two stories to Dylan each night. But since you started sending his own copies of the books home, it is not enough that I read to Dylan. He now has to read each of his books to me every night. You can imagine how long the bed time ritual has become." She began to list the titles of books on her fingers. I just chuckled.

In Kindergarten "I Can Write"

Lee Amlin
Barb Wallace

Children entering Kindergarten are usually eager to learn. Many already value writing and use it to communicate with and about their worlds. They see themselves as writers. Although writing may seem natural to them, their continued development as writers requires careful nurturing. Paramount to that nurturing is a warm, inviting classroom in which the experiences and knowledge that each brings are accepted. Encouraging children to communicate their ideas and feelings through writing legitimizes their beliefs about themselves as writers. By engaging in independent writing, children can use the skills they have acquired. Through thoughtful observation and interaction with the children, the teacher becomes aware of individual skill levels and makes decisions on how to support each child along the continuum.

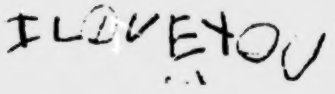
Nurturing emergent writers extends far beyond a print-rich environment in which many opportunities for writing are provided. Nurturing also includes modelling. Shared, interactive writing of stories, news, daily schedules of activities, directions, instructions for making things, messages, invitations, thank you notes and letters are but few of the avenues through which the many features of writing are modelled. As children observe and participate in writing they gain understanding and develop their knowledge about features of the tasks such as directionality, sound–symbol relations and punctuation, all essential to growth in writing.

Kindergarten children are natural storytellers and provision is made for them to tell and listen to stories. Equally important is ensuring that children enjoy language and make connections between reading and writing. Storytime is an exciting, shared experience among author, illustrator, children and teacher. Children participate by reciting repetitive parts, dramatizing, retelling and relating their own experiences as they make connections. Such activities not only provide enjoyment, develop sequencing and a sense of story; they stimulate the imagination. This stimulation of the imagination ensures the effectiveness of nurturing activities.

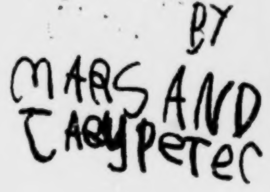
Journal writing, in addition to providing children with the opportunity to write about themselves and their feelings, becomes a personal collection of experiences and writing behaviours. By sharing, the child receives positive response and encouragement.

It is interesting to follow the writing growth of both Marissa and Tyler. The following are samples from a first journal entry in September, one in January and the other in early March. They arrived at Kindergarten as confident writers.

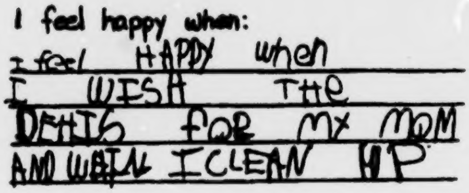
Marissa



September


BY
MARS AND
JAOYPETER

January

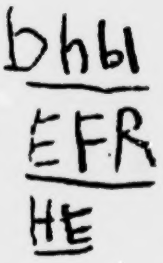

I feel happy when:
I feel HAPPY when
I WISH THE
DEHIS FOR MY MOM
AND WATN I CLEAN UP

March

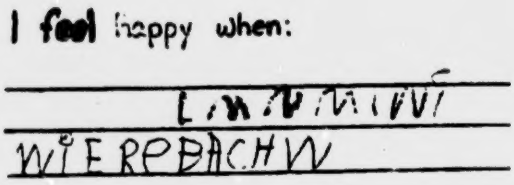
In her first entry Marissa shares with her audience words she is able to write correctly, unassisted. She demonstrates her awareness of words and word boundaries as she continues to take risks and experiment with print. Before long she begins to apply her knowledge of letter sounds to unfamiliar words like Jupiter. In the final entry she copies the prompt and uses both upper and lower case letters to express her ideas. The conjunction "and" is used appropriately in both her second and third entries.

Tyler

September



January


I feel happy when:
WIEREPBACHW

March

Tyler, demonstrating his knowledge that letters convey messages, communicates "I like school," by using a series of letters in left to right progression. As he writes his wish list for Santa he begins to show his knowledge of lines of print and how to prepare a list. In his final entry he uses a combination of upper and lower case letters in two continuous lines of print to tell his audience that "I feel happy when . . . Tyler gets presents." Here he shows his understanding that words are usually represented by more than one letter.

Marissa and Tyler are unquestionably writers. Throughout their journey, the teacher remains a vigilant observer demonstrating, explaining and creating meaningful opportunities for writing and growth.

Progress Portfolios

Steacy Collyer

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of work that shows the child's efforts and progress in selected areas. An effective portfolio should include the child's choice of samples and self-reflection, criteria for judging achievement and an indication of why samples were selected.

The progress portfolios described here, evolved as I tried many different portfolio systems and began involving students in assessment, evaluation and reporting through student-led conferences. They are modelled after the "Progress Folios" used by Anne Davies and Colleen Politano (1994).

Many portfolios are wonderful collections of children's work, but often contain too many samples and a lack of curriculum information. They are beautiful scrapbooks, but not effective assessment portfolios identifying student growth and achievement.

The organization of some portfolios makes it difficult for children and parents to see the progress made over time because of the excess number of pages dividing similar work samples completed over several months. The progress portfolio clearly shows, on each double-page spread, the progress the child is making throughout the year, without flipping back and forth between pages.

The progress portfolio is created using a commercial, coil-bound scrapbook or a collection of 11" x 17" sheets of paper, coiled-bound. It is framed by personal information on the front and back covers. This could include an illustration by the child, the child's photograph, a name poem, or a scribed description of likes and interests. The first page inside the scrapbook is the Table of Contents, which is filled in at the end of the year after the portfolio is complete. The majority of the pages are double-page spreads that identify important areas of curriculum and student learning. Sample categories for Kindergarten include:

- Language Arts: Letters/Words I Know, Favourite Read Alouds (photocopy cover and/or have child illustrate), Storytelling (scribed for child), Journal entries.
- Mathematics: Patterning, Numbers, Problem Pictures, My Measurements
- Community and Environment: My Home, Building Things (photographs), All About Me, My Favourite Centre
- Personal and Social Responsibility: Self-reflections under most samples
- Physical Skills and Well-being: Recess Fun, Foods I Like, Great Games
- Creative and Cultural Expression: Self Portrait, Favourite Poems, Art.

The categories are limitless, but should reflect the curriculum and the program that the child is experiencing.

Each double-page spread is divided according to the number of reporting periods or collection times used by the teacher. Many teachers collect samples in September, November, March and June. Portfolio samples can also be collected only two or three times a year, but the pages need to be divided and labelled appropriately.

The progress portfolio is teacher-friendly, because the scrapbooks are stored away for most of the year and brought out only when it is time to glue in new samples. Throughout the year, all work should be collected, date-stamped and kept at school so that there is a bank of work to draw from. Specific samples that are repeated each time for the different double-page spreads can also be created just before each reporting period/collection time.

A critical component of good portfolios is evidence of self-reflection. Even young children need to be taught and encouraged to think about their learning and reflect on the samples included in their own portfolio. This is done by gluing all samples along the top or side, so that the work can be pulled back to reveal the scrapbook page underneath the sample. This is where the child can write or draw reflections for the chosen work or glue in previously written reflections. Examples of reflection:

- This pattern makes me feel (child fills in circle with happy, sad, straight face)
- This is my favourite book because …(adult scribes)
- I like this centre best because …

Most Kindergarten reflection is done orally, so it is important to record some of it for the portfolio by using parent volunteers or older school buddies. It is the most time-consuming part of the portfolio, but is worth the effort. It is very rewarding to hear children talk about their own learning.

Any extra pages at the end of the portfolio can be used to celebrate the school year by including extra photographs, art work, classmate autographs, a letter from the teacher or a parent's comments. These extra special touches truly make the collection a celebration of the child's year.

Remember that each year the progress portfolio is a work in progress. It will not remain constant from child to child or from year to year. It will, however, help all students see their progress and share their learning experiences with their parents.

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Reporting Student Progress: One Teacher's Solution

E. Nola Aitken

It was that time of year again—reporting student progress—often a time of stress for teachers, parents, and children. It was no different at my school, and on October 23 the conference day finally arrived . . .

Amid aromas of coffee and doughnuts, we see flushed-faced teachers bustling in and out of their classrooms, parents traipsing up and down corridors, toddlers trailing; waiting outside classrooms—some anxious, a few catching up on the latest with neighbours, some looking impatiently at watches, and others peering at conference schedules. . . .

"A half-hour wait," barks an exasperated husband to his wife. "Let's catch Mr. W—no, that won't work—then we'll be late for Ms B . . . .!

Mrs. D (waiting outside the classroom):
When on earth is Mrs. T going to leave! She must think that she's the only one scheduled. Look at Ms J—nodding and smiling at her . . . and are these chairs ever hard!

Ms J (glancing furtively at the clock):
Oh no—look at the time! I'm a half-hour behind schedule! How can I tactfully get Mrs. G to leave! She thinks she's the only one with problems. I wish she were more like Mrs. C—she rushed through her conference because she knew I was behind schedule—and I really wanted more time with her and Jamie. There's so much I wanted to discuss. It's hard to be tied to fifteen minutes to celebrate each child's growth. I didn't have much to share with Sheila at this time of the year—she's in Grade 1 and was in my class last year. Late November would be a better time to see her parents—not mid-October. And Suzy—I needed to see her parents mid-September! I did end up phoning them, but an actual conference would have been more effective . . . . Ah! Here's an opportunity to wrap this up . . . .

"Well thanks Jay and Mrs. G."

It occurred to me then, how inappropriately we were dealing with conference schedules. I talked this over with my principal and she agreed that the current schedule was inappropriate. But what to do?

My suggestion was this: Instead of scheduling all the conference in one day and evening, why not have them over an extended period of time and schedule for when they were most needed? That way, I could then have sufficient time to have a meaningful discussion about each child's work and progress. Children progress at different rates and have individual needs, so conferences should be scheduled accordingly. Scheduling them according to administrative convenience—October 23 was clearly inappropriate. While October 23 may be an optimum time for a half-dozen children or so, it wasn't for the whole 30. I needed to see some children earlier than others, and some later. And after the tenth consecutive interview, the quality of my conference deteriorated rapidly!

My principal saw my point and supported my plan. The following year I had a Family Grouping of Kindergarten to Grade 2. I set up the conferences this way. In late August I arranged home visits to meet my new students and parents and to become reacquainted with the others from the previous year. This ensured that we were off to a sound start—questions were answered—expectations clarified, and a Parent–involvement Program was set up—but best of all, communication lines were opened. By late September I started my Fall conferences. I had three conferences involving children in grades one and two, and one involving a Kindergarten child who clearly needed some attention. I held about ten in October and the remainder spread throughout November and early December. I held the conferences after school, in the evenings, and some on weekends, times when I was working in my classroom anyway. Communication with parents was not limited to the conferences. I was in contact regularly via monthly newsletter and telephone, and again through the Parent Involvement Program. Subsequently, I was able to keep parents well informed and I could address any potential misunderstandings immediately. I arranged the Spring conferences similarly.

Benefits? The quality of the interview was vastly superior. More fathers attended. I was more focused, and overall, it was more meaningful, convenient, and an enjoyable event for everyone.

On the downside, initially it seemed more time-consuming because I had interviews every month. But actually this was an advantage. It resulted in very good communication with, and support from the parents. The child's needs and progress were reported at optimum times, which ensured an effective and efficient student progress reporting plan for everyone—and one that just made more sense!

Student-led Conferences

Inie Graham

My parent–teacher interview format was obviously not meeting the needs of the parents, the children or myself. Half of the parents were not showing up for their interviews or, if they did arrive, there was no time to thoroughly discuss all their concerns in the 15 minutes allotted for the interview.

I needed to create a situation that would provide a sufficient comfort level for both parents and children to participate. I needed a new way to fulfill my obligation to communicate children's growth. My concerns were answered when I attended a workshop in which the presenter discussed her "Open House" concept for Grade 1 reporting to parents. I used her ideas in combination with my own to create a student-led conference in which the children lead their parents through the work that has been the primary focus for that reporting period. The results were remarkable—100 per cent of my parents attended every session for years to follow!

Several weeks prior to the conference, parents are sent a letter to inform them of the format for our evening of celebration. The classroom is open from 4:30–7:30 p.m., with no scheduled appointments. There is an air of an "open house" to the evening, as parents come and go at their convenience.

My responsibility includes creating an agenda with my class for the children to use in leading their parents through the program. This agenda provides the guide that keeps the parents focused and prevents the enthusiasm of the children from bubbling over into excited chaos. My constant concern is the struggle to keep the agenda to a length that won't exhaust the participants and yet to give a thorough review of the growth that has occurred.

The day of the celebration, the children help by gathering their science logs, art, writer's workshop books and portfolios into one stack, topped with their name placecard and placed on the table. As we celebrate their learning daily in the class, there is little need to rehearse the conference. This evening definitely reinforces their view of themselves as learners.

The best part is the evening itself! Welcoming parents, observing the excitement, and sharing in the discoveries that invariably occur, are confirmation that this method works for everyone.

I have found the advantages for this method of conferencing to be:

- the child's self-esteem soars as they explain their own learning to their favourite captive audience
- parents see and feel the ambience of the classroom first hand. They "view the child in their own workplace" as one parent commented
- there is continuity between the child-centred ECS program and the open-ended child-centred reporting experience
- parents become familiar with the ways that education has changed since their childhood. I am educating parents through this method, which I found difficult to do in a traditional interview
- there is no duplicating the comments on the progress report—I stop being the translator or interpreter of the child's learning
- it provides another opportunity for me, as teacher, to observe child–parent interactions and learn more about the child and the family
- best of all, I am not exhausted by weeks of late evening interviews which tend to overlap and blur after hours of struggling to reflect the uniqueness of each individual child.

After seven years of participating in student-led conferencing, I haven't found any disadvantages for any grade level or any ability level of any child. Everyone loves to show what they know!

If the entire school should choose to use this reporting method, I have discovered that parents appreciate having two evenings—one for Division 1 and one for Division 2.

The key to success may be the "agenda." It is a concrete guide for both the parent and child to work within. It provides the framework for the celebration. The children provide the enthusiasm!

My Themes: The Children's Jungle

Anne Hill

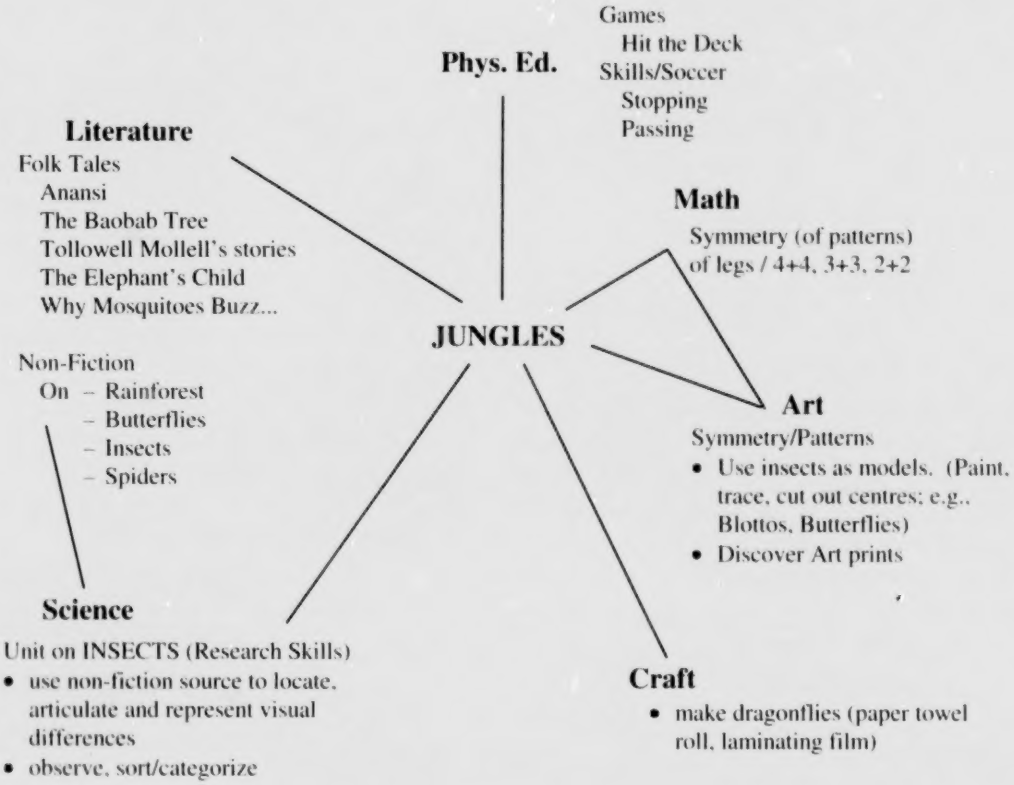
I am a collector. I have boxes of props and even more boxes of "paper stuff" like pictures, ideas and craft directions. For the last few years I have begun to feel reasonably well organized. I am confident with my themes because I have resources at hand and ideas tested out. However, this year in the span of one short week, the children in the block centre eroded that developing sense of confidence and organization. We had been working through a broad theme of "Structures," and had just finished a short project on bridges. I thought we would go on to wheels, since two of the children were expressing interest in motorbikes. I began to put out books and the community parts (the bikes, motorbikes, and riders) of the Lego set. I set up pictures of vehicles in several parts of the room. I began to engage small groups of children in conversations about their experiences with bikes. That was my plan.

Several of the children had other plans. When I took part in conversation at the block centre, we did not have a sustained conversation about wheels. I tried. The children were polite; they didn't interrupt me. But they did not respond with their own comments. They were busy building boats with blocks. "Not just boats," they told me. These were ships. As I listened, I watched them put smaller blocks inside spaces between the bigger blocks. These smaller blocks, they said, were the "fish."

Each day for a week, six or seven children would organize themselves and pretend to travel to "the jungle" in their ship. Aquariums with their fish were built into a block-ship each day and soon it took all of centre time to simply create the complex structure with its additions of treasure and food. Cloths that had been in the dramatic play area near the block centre were transformed into bandannas for "pirates." Small blocks and plastic "Moli Ques" became jewels. The children became distressed when it was time to clean up each day. They'd only just begun!

I had to make a choice. Should I continue with "Wheels" or begin a brand new theme? Would I find enough materials, pictures, stories and activities? How long would it take me to write up conceptual and skills objectives so the parents would understand how this theme would be helpful to the children's learning? Obviously the children had enough materials to work with. They had solved that problem on their own. Garage sale season was beginning, so maybe I could find a few props. I hoped to work with the children on a project with eggs and to become involved with some activities based on a water theme near the end of the school term. Maybe the ship that took the children to the jungle would help to provide some continuity. Questions, answers, ideas, and more questions tangled in confused thought.

I decided to follow the children's lead. We discovered some folk tales with a jungle focus. This led to some children developing some basic research skills as they found out more about insects through books and observations. Drawing a web of possibilities helped focus our work.



JUNGLES

Phys. Ed.
Games
  Hit the Deck
Skills/Soccer
  Stopping
  Passing

Literature
Folk Tales
  Anansi
  The Baobab Tree
  Tollowell Mollell's stories
  The Elephant's Child
  Why Mosquitoes Buzz...

Non-Fiction
  On – Rainforest
    – Butterflies
    – Insects
    – Spiders

Math
Symmetry (of patterns)
of legs / 4+4, 3+3, 2+2

Art
Symmetry/Patterns
- Use insects as models. (Paint, trace, cut out centres: e.g., Blottos, Butterflies)
- Discover Art prints

Science
Unit on INSECTS (Research Skills)
- use non-fiction source to locate, articulate and represent visual differences
- observe, sort/categorize

Craft
- make dragonflies (paper towel roll, laminating film)

In the monthly newsletter, I connected this jungle theme with the concepts and skills the children were learning. The focus shifted from insects to birds as we had planned to incubate some eggs. Part of the newsletter looked like this:

Theme
Jungles—Hot Forests

Our focus for the next 3 weeks will be on birds and we will be hatching eggs.

Concepts/Skills

Language Arts

I will be encouraging the children to use "higher order" thinking skills. For example, they will be encouraged to recall information they have seen and heard and asked to put this information together (synthesize) to compare information. Questions such as "How are hot forests like jungles the same as the cold forests near our homes?" will help children talk about their learning.

The children will also:

- recognize words that are the same from a choice of not more than 20 words.

- recognize rhyming words in print
- practise printing skills in a meaningful context in order to increase their confidence with upper and lower case letters and some basic sight words

The children have begun working in "journals" and sharing their writings and drawings with others.

Math

The children will be collecting and organizing data in response to questions, such as:

- What animals can you think of that lay eggs?
- What animals do not lay eggs?
- How many did you find that lay eggs?
- What are the characteristics of animals that lay eggs?
- Where can you find out how to answer this question?

The children will continue to practise basic skills using games, computer programs and paper/pencil tasks.

Science

Thank you to our Jr. High science teacher for showing us the python and letting us hold it.

The children will now be creating and sustaining habitats for incubating eggs and raising chicks.

Art

Children will be making a variety of 3-dimensional structures, such as jungle creatures and animal homes

Physical Education

Children will be skipping—using hoops and ropes—so they will have an opportunity to develop some skills before we begin the school-wide Jump Rope for Heart.

The Back Yard: A Project on Rocks

Dianne Mellott

The children and staff at the University of Alberta Child Study Centre had been back to school for a few short weeks. The staff decided to start the year with a project we called "The Back Yard," as we are fortunate to have a large yard at our school (which is in an old house) and the children would have experiences to share of their yards at home. We had thought to explore the varieties of ground cover as one area of focus. In Phase I, exploration, we were interested in finding out the children's knowledge base. Using hands-on experiences as a vehicle, we could discover what the children really knew, what their misconceptions were and what they wanted to know about their world.

With this in mind, I gathered bits of ground cover and brought them inside to develop a topographical map of our yard. As we glued gravel and sand to our map, the children discussed their work and the properties of the different ground covers. I noted their questions, their answers and the misconceptions that arose naturally as they worked. "How did the water get in to the pond?" B asked. Another child answered, "From the garden hose." L wondered how the sand got under the climber. R thought from a truck. I wondered, "What is sand made from?" "From dirt and rocks and water mixed up," S replied, after noting the bits of debris mixed in the sand from the play yard. "No, sand is made from rocks that are crushed," another child argued. "How?" I asked. "With a drill," "With a saw," "No, with a hammer," B confidently replied. "Yeah, with a jack hammer," S agreed.

Later, after we had set aside our topographical map and gone out to the back yard, the small group of children I had been working with showed interest in exploring the sand and pebble areas of the yard. B brought me a rock he found in the sand as proof that rocks are crushed into sand. M spent a long time carefully exploring the pebbles that covered part of the yard. He brought me several tiny samples to admire. Another child noted that there were many small rocks at the base of the bushes and asked if she could take some home. As I observed the children, I became aware of their interest in the areas that they could manipulate and explore with all their senses, those they could dig in, create with, mix together, and use as a safe landing spot as they explored their physical strength.

The next day I set out samples of sand, inside play sand and sand from the different areas of our yard. I added a variety of magnifying glasses and some tweezers to the table. Soon S was exploring the samples. I sat near him as he compared the inside play sand, which was different in texture from the outside sand, which contained bits of rock, wood, dirt and leaves.

Using a web, I generated ideas to set a basic framework and plan the general direction for this mini-project. These plans had to be flexible and open to the children's personal knowledge and interests. This give and take between adult and child is important to the success of the project, and affords children a sense of ownership for their own learning.

At the end of the project, I took time to reflect. I considered the original goals I had set out for myself, the children and the project. Overall, I felt the project had been a success. I had gained valuable information about myself, my role, and what works and what doesn't within the context of a project for these children. They had reinforced my idea that adults must be reflective and sensitive to what we can learn from children. They were accurate barometres of what is engaging project work and what is meaningless, adult-driven work. The children welcomed the challenge when problems were presented to them in a child-centred manner. When *they* wanted to learn, the project was engaging. When *I* wanted them to learn, the work was frustrating for us all.

I learned that opportunities to explore similarities, differences and the properties of rocks were far more meaningful when they happened through exploration and construction of the rock garden and rock museum. When activities such as a Venn Diagram or weighing rocks were out of context for children constructing their own knowledge, they soon lost interest. I figured out that graphing the rocks children had classified by colour, shape and size within the context of the museum would have been more successful after the children had developed ownership for the project. I thought of questions that might have helped: How many egg-shaped rocks have we found? Are there more or fewer egg-shaped rocks than shiny rocks? How can we record this information? Do the striped rocks or the rough rocks weigh more? Why do you suppose they do?

Did the children learn? Yes, they did, and it is up to me to articulate and celebrate that learning with the children and their families. Therefore, I need to be aware of what they are learning as they engage in a project. Children learn mathematics through experience, by using numbers in construction, and by manipulating their environment. They learn science, social studies and early literacy in similar experiential ways. The challenge for the teacher is to provide meaningful opportunities, to scaffold that learning, to be able to articulate it and to model wonder.

Did the children develop the disposition of successful learners? Again, the answer is 'yes'. They took on ownership of the project, developed a sense of teamwork and community, became involved, gained a sense of wonder, competence and satisfaction. And they celebrated this with their families, with each other and with me.

What was intended to be a mini-project had extended for eight weeks. Two months after its completion, S still wants to be a geologist and M's parents tell me he continues to sleep with a rock beside his bed.

Curriculum Areas Developed in the Rock Project

Mathematics

- classification and organization of rocks; in displays, graphing and Venn diagram
- comparison of rocks with each other and with those pictured in resource books
- estimation of area needed to build components of the museum; e.g., number of blocks needed to build a display case the same size as plexi-glass top
- measurement with blocks and spanners when building rock museum, display shelves and cases; e.g., how far apart to place supports under the shelves
- mapping
- counting: rocks, blocks, tickets
- one-to-one correspondence; e.g., rock on one display block

Science

- cause and effect; e.g., through block construction
- balance; balance scales, block construction
- weight; comparing weights of rocks using scales and bags

- observation of geologist doing hardness tests, using chemicals and tools in rock identification
- developing research skills and attention to detail

Early Literacy

- printing; labelling components of rock garden and rocks in museum, making signs
- writing thank you card to the geologist
- listening to, telling and dictating stories
- using books as resources
- labelling field notes

Art

- drawing and sketching: memory drawing, observational drawing and taking field notes
- attention to colour, texture and shape of rocks
- creating displays
- use of clay in rock representation
- attention to detail through observational drawing and field notes

Social Skills/Dispositions

- teamwork and cooperation; constructing rock garden and rock museum, role playing
- use of problem-solving strategies in conflict resolution; taking turns, listening, recognizing feelings of self and others, developing tolerance and patience, respect for others, flexibility
- curiosity
- helpfulness
- responsibility
- risk taking
- empathy and nurturance.

Light: A Visit to the Child Study Centre

Sylvia Chard

The children are studying light. The classroom has displays of interesting objects and invitations to investigate using flashlights, prisms and reflecting materials. One day, in the second week of the project, the teacher issued a challenge. She asked a small group of boys, Justin, Martin and Vincent, if they could build a block structure that could keep out the light and be big enough for them to get inside.

After completing the walls, the children wanted to make a roof that would keep out the light. There were only enough long, flat pieces to cover half the roof area. The next size pieces were half the length. Watching the boys work, Alice suggested, "You could use one long one down the middle like the ridge beam in a house roof and put the half-sized pieces on each side." The children's first attempt let the light in through cracks between the blocks in the walls, so they built a second wall around the first so that none of the cracks coincided. Over a period of three days (about one hour a day) they succeeded in making a light-proof room.

The children explored inside the structure with flashlights. They described the different quality of the light reflected on the walls and the shapes and patterns they saw. The beam of light made a circle or an ellipse with a bright centre and a paler band around it. They found that the pattern was clearer when they were farther from the entrance. They had an interesting time trying to maximize the amount of light the flashlights would make in their block house by using the wall mirrors opposite the door of the structure. The teacher helped the children with new words to describe their experiences as they learned about the nature of light and shadow: reflection, beam, distance, angle, intense, faint and centre.

Other children were working with large acetate sheets and an overhead projector. They explored special effects with multiple images and a collage of different kinds of fabric to add shading and texture to the images. Jeremy, Martin and Vincent wanted to work with the overhead projector that day, but they had to wait their turn. The teacher suggested they might like to take overhead transparencies and shine the flashlights through their drawings in their light-proof block house. They found that their felt marker pictures did not show up well on the block wall, so they taped up some newsprint. It was difficult for them to manage a flashlight and a transparency, so they found ways to position the pictures between the roof pieces and attach them with tape. They found that to get a good image you had to have the transparency at an optimum distance from the 'screen.' Throughout this work the children had to be careful how they moved inside their room because it could be knocked down easily.

Jeremy discovered that he could make an image move across the screen by moving the flashlight horizontally or up and down. This led to the idea of background pictures with foreground characters that moved. They worked on positioning two transparencies to achieve this effect. They made a drawing of a spider that moved over a table. Once they could make a movie, they needed a story line.

The work with overhead projector transparencies led the teacher to suggest making slide sequences to be shown with a slide projector. The teacher provided sheets of blank acetate film and a supply of 35 mm plastic frames. The children first had to plan a sequence of pictures to represent main events in their story. Then they had to draw their very small pictures on paper. When the plan was complete, they used the fine markers in rectangles they outlined on the clear film. Emma worked very slowly and meticulously. Justin worked quickly, impatient to use the projector. Vincent and Martin figured out that they could halve the work if they both contributed pictures to the same slide sequence. However, this required agreement on their story and its main events. They did not get the work done any faster, but their story benefited from their collaboration.

When the pictures were drawn on the film, the children cut them out and clipped them into the frames. Through trial and error and collaborative problem solving, the children drew around the frame (too big, sprung open, got stuck in the projector), drew around the inside of the frame (too small, wouldn't stay in), and found the ridge guides in the frame and marked where the film had to be cut to just the right size.

Justin took some time to figure out that he had to unscrew the ring that locked the slides into the tray (<unlock, lock>). Then he worked on finding the best piece of wall to use as a screen and on choosing the optimum size of picture (the larger the picture, the fainter the image). The children worked for several days on their stories. They worked on preparing a slide show for their parents.

This small project owed much to the work that led up to this point; the building project of the previous term, the big book stories the children were working on at the same time, and the shared experience of holiday lights and candles during the recent festive season.

Whales and Dolphins:
One Teacher's Application of the Reggio Approach

Barb Gerst

In the fall of 1990, I began my new role as a Kindergarten teacher, eager to make a difference in the lives of young children. I carefully planned ten themes for the year as I had observed other teachers doing, and moved at a hurried pace in the classroom. Experienced Kindergarten teachers assured me a hectic schedule was characteristic of a classroom filled with young children.

In 1993, I reflected upon my work in the Kindergarten classroom. I was dissatisfied, aware that I often merely touched the surface of a great many topics, never exploring any in significant depth as I had done as a high school teacher.

Then I attended a session about the preschools of Reggio Emilia and found it a wonderful inspiration. I learned that Reggio teachers explore topics in great depth with their students. While involved in a project, they challenge children to explore their environments and express themselves through all their natural languages, including words, movement, drawing, drama, collage and shadow play.

In 1996, I began to apply Reggio philosophy in my classroom. I knew I needed to alter my image of myself as a teacher. I realized that I often considered myself as the expert and the authority in my environment. I always had ultimate control as the director and leader of the curriculum. The Reggio perspective considers the teacher a collaborator. The teacher works together with children, parents and other teachers to spark interest in a topic, investigate what the children already know and help develop projects based on a given interest. I was apprehensive and confused. How would I ever make such a profound shift in my view of myself and my role as a teacher? I began by re-examining my image and my role in the classroom. And so began our whale and dolphin study.

Now that I viewed myself as a partner in the learning process, I began to note the new ways in which children were responding to me. When they observed that I was genuinely placing a value on their whale and dolphin sketches, they began to consult me, and each other, more about their drawings. Our conversations frequently motivated and inspired them to revise and refine their sketches. With surprise, I noted that some children were using my very words to motivate others to explore books and improve their awareness of various aspects of whales and dolphins.

Working as a collaborator in the classroom allowed me to take on many different roles, some of which I would not have valued previously. Sometimes I was a nurturer of the children, supporting their growth. At other times, I was their partner in learning as we explored materials together and deepened our knowledge of sea creatures. I became a provocateur, challenging and probing the children to expand their abilities to think critically. I functioned as the class's memory when I tape recorded conversations and played them back to remind children of what they had actually said. I was a documenter who created large displays of their sketches, paintings and clay projects. I typed their many stories and conversations about our project and added those to the display. I took several pictures of their work, their dramatic play, water activities and block structures. I became a learner who took a clay class and made a whale so I could then teach the children about using clay. I was also the facilitator of our whale and dolphin project. Although trying to take on the many roles of a Reggio teacher was often tiring, sometimes confusing and a lot of hard work, I do believe that my teaching in the classroom improved immensely as a result.

I soon noted that the children's role in the classroom became increasingly rich and varied during our four-month whale and dolphin study. Many children decided to translate their ideas from one "language" to another. Some made whales from carpet underlay, based on drawings and dramatizations of favourite whale stories. Others made up whale songs and tales and then created books containing whale drawings, stories and tunes. Many explored a variety of whale books and took ideas from them to their play in the block centre or water table. Some listened to authentic killer whale and humpback whale songs, and then drew pictures of whales and dolphins communicating. Opportunities for children in the classroom seemed more plentiful indeed, than in the days prior to my application of the Reggio approach.

In early spring, I was very moved as I looked for the first time at my class's display of their beautiful clay whales and dolphins in our school's large display case. I felt that my first attempt at applying Reggio ideas in my Kindergarten classroom represented a significant turning point in my teaching career. Despite many concerns and some frustrations, it felt so right.

Planning a Unit Using Themes

Barb Hogan

In my first year of teaching Kindergarten, I discovered how to use themes as a tool for directing children's learning and providing a focus to my teaching.

One of my favourite themes to teach is "Bears." We start with good fiction, ranging from classics such as *Goldilocks* to *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*. Then we add a repertoire of poems, chants and songs. Finally, we add non-fiction books about bears. One of my favourites is *Bears, Bears, Bears*, by Wayne Lynch.

Then we build activities around all this good language. This year, our activities included:

- writing Brown Bear pattern books
- making bear name tags to hang on the door
- illustrating a retelling of the story of Goldilocks
- making bear puppets
- making bear footprints using your fists
- watching movies about bears (an excellent one is *The Woman Who Raised a Bear as Her Son*)
- cooking porridge
- using *Lions Quest* "Q-Bear" activities
- turning the house into a bear den
- talking about hibernation and sleeping through the winter.

The final celebration to the unit was a Teddy Bear's Picnic. We invited our reading buddies to come hear us read poems and to have a picnic. The writing this inspires was amazing! First, we wrote to our guests, asking them to attend. Then, they wrote back saying they would love to attend. After the picnic, we received a post card from each student saying thank you. During the picnic, the Kindergarten children were able to show off how well they could read their poems and bear books. It was inspiring for the bigger kids to see younger children so excited about reading.

One way I have found to bridge the gap between home and school is to write a poem the students know right on their crafts. For example, when we made bear puppets, the poem "I Love My Bear" was written on the tummy of the bear. This way, the kids can practice their reading and chants at home, and their parents can help.

Themes are a great way to give focus and direction to Kindergarten activities. And they give children a chance to learn all they can about specific topics.

Home Visits

Lynette Husum

Christina was anxiously awaiting my arrival on the front steps of her home. She greeted me with a warm smile and affectionate hug. "What took you so long? I made cinnamon buns for you this morning with my mom. Do you like cinnamon? I put lots on!" Douglas was quietly hiding in his bedroom. His mother could not convince him to come to the kitchen, not even with gentle pleas and reassurances. Jordan patiently stood by his mother while I shared information with her. After five minutes he turned to me and stated "I thought you came to see me!" Dezare swung open her front door before I had an opportunity to ring the bell, and asked "When do I get to start school?" These four children were meeting their Kindergarten teacher in their home prior to starting their school year. Joy, fear, impatience and excitement are only a few of the many emotions that can be experienced by children and their families as they begin school.

Home visits require a lot of time, energy and organization. The length of each visit, travel time between homes, and class size contribute to some long days. However, the benefits are paid back in multiples of the initial investment of time and energy. For the past 13 years I have had the privilege of being invited into the homes of children with whom I will work, play and learn.

The home visitation program is optional. Families receive a letter in the spring describing the program and the potential benefits to all—child, parent and teacher. If families are interested in participating in the program, they are asked to fill out a form and return it to the school before the end of June. I then organize a visit to each child's home before the school year begins.

There are many potential benefits of a home visitation program. For children, a home visit provides an opportunity to meet their Kindergarten teacher within the security of their own home. The visit helps to lessen anxiety and fear in those children who are anxious about starting school. Children have an early opportunity to share areas of personal interest with their teacher.

For parents, the visits are an early opportunity to develop an educational partnership. Home visits lay the foundation for effective communication between home and school. Parents receive information and have their questions about the Kindergarten program and school answered. The visits also aid parents in easing the transition of their children from home to school.

For the teacher, home visits are an invaluable opportunity to spend individual time with each child before they start school. The teacher is able to discover each child's interests and the strengths each will bring to the classroom. The home visits provide an opportunity for the teacher to educate and inform parents of the developmentally appropriate practices that govern a Kindergarten program. The value and importance of communication is modelled through the home visits.

Christina came to her first day of Kindergarten with a bright smile on her face and a tray of cinnamon buns for her teacher. "I made these for you. Just the way you like them, with lots of cinnamon!" Douglas needed his mom to stay in the classroom with him on his first day, until he felt secure. After 30 minutes she gave him a kiss and a hug and said goodbye with tears in her eyes. Douglas sat beside his teacher at the playdough table. He waved an enthusiastic goodbye to his mom as he rolled, squished and manipulated the yellow playdough. Jordan greeted his teacher on his first day with a warm, tight hug. "Hi! Do you remember me? You came to my house and visited me. Do I get to play at Kindergarten?" Dezare strode into the classroom with confidence on her first day. She did not want her mom to help her with her coat or with her shoes. "I am five years old and I can go to school. I'm a big girl now, Mom! I can do it on my own!"

The Adventure Begins

Brenda Wolodko

The first day in kindergarten is an emotionally charged experience. In my class I make every attempt to ensure that the experience is a positive one in which the children develop a sense that kindergarten is a world of excitement and adventure.

I begin by gathering the children on the carpet area to see a special bag that contains something that is very important to me. After enthusiastic encouragement from the children, I take out a book. Very slowly and with great ceremony, I explain to the children that this is one of my favourite books. A hushed tone inevitably falls over the classroom as I begin to read *The Gingerbread Man*. By the end of the story many children are chanting with me as I read the repetitive parts.

When the story is finished I take a small group of children to the cooking centre to roll out gingerbread dough and create and decorate gingerbread people. During this time we talk about things such as what the gingerbread man in the story looked like, other places children have seen gingerbread men and what they looked like. I ask the children what other kinds of people they can make out of gingerbread. We also talk about the smell of the gingerbread and its texture. Then we all walk to the staff room and put the gingerbread people into the oven to bake. I casually remark as we leave the room, "I sure hope our gingerbread people don't run away!"

When we get back to the classroom I ask the children, "If the gingerbread man was loose in our classroom what might he see and where might he go?" Based on the suggestions of the students we travel from centre to centre. The children discuss what they think the gingerbread man might do at each centre and what kinds of things he would see. From time to time, I interject information or vocabulary specific to the centre. The children are encouraged to pick up the materials, try them out, and look into all the nooks and crannies. The atmosphere is relaxed and inquiring. I answer questions, but interject only to connect information the children have provided. When the children have explored the centres and materials it is time to go outside for recess to meet with older students and play on familiar equipment.

After recess we eagerly walk the now familiar route to the staff room to get the gingerbread people. They are gone!

I ask the children what we should do and we inevitably set forth on a mission to find them. We stop at several classrooms where the children are introduced to the teacher and the class (pre-arranged). With surprising confidence and evident concern, the children question the teacher and the class about what they might have seen, smelled or heard. I make it clear to the teachers that they are considered to be suspects and I take their photographs to put up on a most wanted poster, just in case. (The poster is then used in the classroom during the year to help children identify people who can help them.) The teachers and students deny eating them but give us clues such as, "No, I didn't see them but I did notice a trail of raisins in the hallway," or, "Hmm, were they brown and about this tall? Yes, I saw them running towards the library. I asked them to walk, but they weren't listening."

Along the way we examine the office and library (usually on our hands and knees in search of the cookies). When we reach the classroom, to our great surprise, we find the gingerbread people waiting for us. As we eat them, we discuss where the cookies may have gone and what adventures they may have had.

As the children are drawn into the adventure, I observe the anxiety draining from their bodies. I am also able to observe how they interact with their environment. I have shown them all of the centres, provided them with the opportunity to explore the centres, given them a tour of the school, introduced them to other adults and older students who can help them, and expressed my love for literature. My goal is to have the children see me as a participant in the adventure of their journey through kindergarten. My goal is also to have the children see themselves as active participants in that adventure.

The First Day in Kindergarten: One Teacher's Story

Josée Quesnel-Moffat

Orientation is probably one of the most valuable activities I undertake in my school year. I find the most practical way to do this is to have new learners and parents come to the classroom in small groups. There are several reasons for this staggered entry. It alleviates the stress for all involved in meeting so many new people all at once. As well, with fewer children and parents in the classroom, I am able to make critical initial observations.

Once I have set up the room for the orientation activities, I get down on my knees to scan it from a child's view point. If I can see that their view might be blocked, that things are placed too high or the room looks too cluttered, I make the appropriate changes. (It also puts me in a good position to say a little prayer that all will go well.)

A number of centres are in the room on the first day. These include books, blocks, puzzles, an art table, a writing table, small manipulatives—such as beads and laces—a science table with a collection of rocks, shells or, nests, and a basic house.

While the newcomers experience these centres, we discuss general expectations and rules, and I observe how well the children are coping in their new environment. As they become familiar with centres and classroom routines, more centres will be introduced.

When children arrive, each child receives a name tag. On a class list, I record which children are able to recognize their names as they select their tag. They are then asked to choose a hook for their coat and school bag. By the time they return to their coat hooks, a card with their picture has been taped over the hook. The pictures are provided by the parents at the beginning of the class, and are placed on cards by our teacher assistant while the children are on their school tour.

While we wait for others to arrive, the children are invited to wander about the room, read a book or work on a puzzle. Sometimes I encourage parents to stay with their child during this staggered entry process.

I turn off the lights and sing a "Clean-Up Song" when we are ready to start.

Once all the children have gathered in front of me, I introduce a "Hello Song." We sing it several times before we play a name game. There are many such games from which to choose. One of my favourites helps children develop auditory memory. The first participant states his or her name. The second states his or her name, as well as the name of the first child. This continues (with adult assistance) until everyone has been introduced. Because each name is repeated several times, the children are better able to remember the names of their classmates. We often continue with a finger play or a poem.

Following the finger play, I take the children on a brief tour of the school. We return to visit each centre in the class and begin discussing what might happen in our classroom. The children are invited to choose a centre. At this time I begin doing individual work with the children, taking them to the art table for an informal language assessment. I work with each child, going through a wordless and rather predictable book, having each child tell me the story. I make anecdotal notes on each child regarding such issues as grammar, articulation, ability to predict, vocabulary and comfort level.

To assess fine motor skills, I have each child draw a large circle on a piece of construction paper. I note pencil grip and tracing skills and, as the circle is cut, I observe scissors grip and cutting skills. With the cutting complete, I ask the child to print his or her name in the middle of the circle. For a follow-up activity, the child is encouraged to transform the circle into a face by adding wool, scraps of paper and features. Together we create a classroom display.

Parents are invited to join us for story time during the last 15 minutes. Following the story we sing a "Goodbye Song." The children are dismissed by the shape of their name tag (e.g., circles, squares, triangles). I say a few words to each child as I unpin their name tag, telling them how much I look forward to seeing them the next time.

Once all the children have left with their parents, my assistant and I share and document observations we have made throughout the session. My assistant will also have made observations of the children during story time. She notices reactions, predictions, level of interest and attention span. These observations serve as a valuable tool for early assessment.

Finally, I make an entry in my journal of thoughts and wonders and interesting anecdotes.

Field Trips

Mark Honert

Kindergarten children are curious and anxious to learn about their environment and the community. They are acute observers, explorers and seekers of meaning. One of the ways we can help children make sense of their experiences and observations is to extend their learning through field trips.

Field trips can be overwhelming for children. The unknown expectations and limits of a new environment can bring about feelings of anxiety. As children experience a wide range of field trips, these feelings often diminish. Familiar places in the community can be used to actively involve children in learning.

When I plan a field trip, I:

- talk with the children about the field trip in advance to learn what information they already possess and what they would like to find out
- consider the date and time of the day for the field visit and try not to schedule them all as the initiating or final activity to a theme or project
- consider the length of the field trip. Is it a long ride? Is it too far to walk?
- discuss the purpose for the trip, what the children have done to prepare themselves, and how to make accommodation for children with differing needs
- arrange for parent volunteers to help with the field trip.

A Sample Field Trip Activity: Designing a Mathematics Walk

Prior to the outing, I visit the location to become familiar with the environment that the children will observe. Then I design mathematics problems based in this environment. These problems also fit one or more of the expectations of the mathematics component of the *Kindergarten Program Statement*. Here are examples of mathematics problems for each of the strands of the common curriculum framework for mathematics.

Number

- Look for numbers on houses, buildings and street signs. Children may write some of these down.
- Count how many steps it takes to get from the school door to the street. How many steps to get to the end of the block? Estimate how many steps it will take to go down the other side of the street.

Patterns and Relations

Identify patterns on building surfaces, inside and outside of school:

- siding on a house

- bricks or cinderblocks on walls
- breaks in sidewalks
- roof tiles
- fences.

Adult helpers can record and draw, or children may draw.

Shapes and Space

Visit a local pet store.

- What size pet carriers fit which pet?
- Find as many different shapes as you can in the pet store.
- How many cat carriers would fit into a big dog kennel?
- Are they all the carriers same shape?

Statistics and Probability (Data Analysis)

- On a trip to a hospital, look for what helps people move; e.g., canes, wheelchairs, beds on wheels. Count these (an adult may have to record).
- On return to school, graph the findings to determine what is the most common way to help people move.

Follow Up to the Field Trip

Field trip experiences do not end once we leave the location. It is important to help children make sense of their experiences and observations by exploring them further in the classroom. They gain additional meaning from the field trip experience by doing some of the following:

- discussing the experience during small or large group time
- engaging materials in dramatic play
- reading books related to the field trip experience
- making thank you cards or pictures for the community people or places visited.

Teaching ESL Children

Kelti Caplan

September 2, 1995 was my first day with my own Kindergarten class. I had many new ideas and was eager to implement them. This was an English as a Second Language school and I knew that I had a big task ahead. As I looked at my brightly decorated classroom I felt proud of the work I had done. Most of all, I was anxious to meet the children. Would there be Jeffreys and Michaels? How many Jennifers? The first child who lined up to register told me that her name was Bich. Her mother told me to call her Sara and that her last name was Nguyen. Out of the first ten students, five had the last name Nguyen. Most of the parents did not speak English. I quickly realized why there was an interpreter present. I asked the interpreter to help parents fill out the registration forms.

I started to experience feelings of panic. What would the children understand? What approaches could I take if I could not communicate directly with parents? What would I need to do differently? As I looked at the children's faces staring up at me, I knew that working with this group of children would not only be challenging, but more rewarding than anything else I had done.

First of all, there was Au Nguyen, a small five-year-old who had not stopped crying from the moment she came to school. As she clasped onto her father's hand, I wasn't sure that she would ever let him go. I attempted to communicate with her father, to no avail. I called on Canh, our Vietnamese interpreter, who informed me that Au's family had only recently moved to Canada. Au seemed to be experiencing some cultural shock. With that in mind, I knew that I would have to help her feel settled. This was a child who needed time to experience a Canadian classroom and Canadian culture. The class must be clearly informed that Au was just learning English and would need our help. Maybe we could also learn some of her first language. As an ESL teacher, my role was to give Au valid experiences to talk about. Above all, I needed to encourage her to speak without fear of making "mistakes."

Vincent Nguyen was another child in my class. At bell time, it became part of my daily ritual to pick Vincent up from the outside bench or scoop him up from his big sister as he cried "No!" Even after speaking to his more fluent older brothers and sisters, I could not figure out why he would cry every day when it was time to come to school. Vincent was afraid of the other children and would cover his eyes when anyone came to talk to him. His behaviour was a mystery to me.

One day when Vincent had to leave early, the mystery was solved. I asked his older sister to have their mother pick him up. Vincent's sister said their mom would be afraid to walk across the street in the rain. "Mom never leaves the house. She's afraid to do anything outside." Mrs. Nguyen eventually did cross the street to pick up her young son. She came into the school with a look of trepidation. She spoke no English and just shyly smiled at me as she reached for Vincent.

I wondered what insight this might give me into Vincent's behaviour. With time, care and gentle encouragement, our Kindergarten program proved beneficial for Vincent.

From the first day of Kindergarten I try to provide experiences rich in language usage and understanding. We have a buddy class to pair up children with mentors who are older and can relate their experiences to the new Kindergarten class. We create, we explore, we discover and, most importantly, we experience. During a recent farm unit, we went out to visit a farm, to touch the pigs, milk the cows and feed the sheep.

I also work to validate their cultural experiences. At Christmas we see a Christmas play, taste Christmas goodies, and share other traditions. The Chinese wait for the visit of Lan Khoong Khoong to fill their stockings. The Mexican children get pinatas full of candy but wait for their gifts until January 6. In Spain, families fast all day on December 24 and cannot eat until after midnight. Depending on the backgrounds of the children, we introduce individual cultural experiences into our classroom planning and activities.

One of my goals as a Kindergarten teacher is to enrich the lives of ESL children with Canadian culture and experiences while still respecting their own cultural and ethnic diversity.

Celebrating the Voices and Community of Our Children

Candice Amber
Doreen Batchelor

"Mîkwac kâwâsîwihk takih pîyatihk pimâtisihk, môya tâpiskoc kâna katohk piyatihk tohpikinawasohk."
(Cree saying)

"Childhood should be a journey not a race." (English Translation)

Becoming an effective Kindergarten instructor is an evolving process. In particular, Kindergarten instructors who work with Aboriginal children require certain characteristics that support the learning partnership between the child and the adult. Care, trust, consistency, respect, patience, honesty, and commitment to self and others are qualities needed by all Kindergarten instructors. For a culturally sensitive instructor, willingness to demonstrate these qualities, inside and outside the classroom, is a priority.

Aboriginal children see the Kindergarten instructor as the mother of their very own classroom. Children will call the authority figure in the classroom, Mom, Grandma, Auntie or Teacher as terms of endearment. The teacher is the primary caregiver at school and performs this role in the same manner as the caregiver at home. Through the eyes of the child, Kindergarten is a natural extension of the home.

Kindergarten is the gateway to future schooling experiences. It is extremely important that children have a loving, comfortable entry into the Kindergarten classroom. Meeting the needs of each child creates a bridge between home culture and school culture. In the early years, both are responsible for providing a solid, secure foundation from which the child grows into his or her potential.

Caregiving prepares the heart of a child to experience trust. Kindergarten teachers build trust through consistency, honesty and respect. Daily, the instructor tends to the needs of each child. Each child has unique gifts within the cultural group to which he or she belongs. It is important to be aware of this, in order to avoid stereotyping.

Children are complex individuals. Each child has a story—a history—in place long before he or she steps foot into the Kindergarten classroom. By moving at a gentle pace rather than a hurried one, the teacher can enter the child's world and try to bring out what is the best in that child. The Kindergarten teacher looks for the gifts of each child, nurtures those gifts and allows the curriculum to encourage and refine the child's gifts.

Some Aboriginal children are negotiating their personal time and structured school time simultaneously. At home a child may take as long as is necessary to observe and practise a new skill. The child is given plenty of time and space to watch and make mistakes. The child self-corrects and continues to deepen his or her understanding until the skill is mastered. When a child takes as long as he or she wants to learn what needs to be learned, the child is involved in his or her own learning process. The child may bring this view of time to the classroom.

When the child encounters structured school time, he or she may feel pressured by this unfamiliar manner of living and learning. It feels rigid, rushed and unnatural. The teachers need patience while the child is making the necessary adjustments between home time and school time. For example, instead of racing against the clock and rushing to put winter clothes on the children for recess, the teacher allows the children to take as long as necessary to put on their own winter clothes. This will take longer, but eventually the children will learn how to dress on their own and they will see this as an accomplishment. Patience demonstrates respect and love for the child.

Learning throughout the day is influenced by a child's homelife. The Kindergarten teacher listens to verbal and nonverbal messages from the child. When a child is upset, the teacher's goal is to help the child share his or her feelings. Acknowledging his or her feelings may lighten the burden that the child is carrying. Giving plenty of time for the child to express feelings and thoughts is also important. Continuous sharing helps the child redirect the heart and mind toward finding something positive in his or her day. The goal is to put a smile on the child's face before he/she returns home. The child will remember how he/she was helped through difficult circumstances.

Children are keen observers and watch for messages that teacher conduct sends to them. How a teacher behaves in daily life matters to both parents and community members also. Children will imitate behaviours that are modelled for them.

It is important to let children resolve their own conflicts. If two children are fighting over a toy, the teacher might ask them to sit down and talk about how they are going to resolve this problem. The teacher does not resolve the problem for them. The children learn that talking through a problem is the best way to handle disputes in life. If the teacher values this approach to conflict resolution, the children will as well.

In the classroom, culture is evident everywhere. Cree culture and farming culture are part of Keg River. Learning centres in the classroom contain materials for real experiences like farm tools, dry meat tasting, fleshing of the beaver demonstration, snowshoes, cooking bannock and Cree stories and songs on cassettes. Cree materials and Cree words are on display everywhere in the classroom and in the hallways. Affirming the child's identity and kinship helps build self-respect and appreciation for the relationships among people in the local community. It is important to know who is related to whom in the community. Children in Kindergarten don't really see cultural differences until someone points out the differences to them. Children see everyone in their world holistically. Everything and everyone is connected and not divided into categories or compartments.

Many different terms are used to describe Aboriginal people: First Nations, Native, Non-Status, Status-Treaty, Bill C-31, Indian, Metis and Indigenous Person. The child's family will let the teacher know what is appropriate for their child. These terms are used interchangeably in some communities, but in other communities these terms may be confusing and inappropriate for a young person. It is necessary to find out what is accepted in the community. This is part of the protocol of the community.

An activity in Kindergarten that provides a comfortable and healthy learning environment for children is "Show and Tell" or "Show and Share." This is a learning precursor to the activity called Sharing Circle in the Native Language classrooms in grades 1 to 6. These activities teach children the many ways of expressing themselves and how to respect silence and the thinking that goes on during silence. Both activities are a reflection of the cultural teaching method of our Elders. Elders are our grandparents. They teach our children to listen, observe and appreciate silence. Elders will not tell anyone directly what to do or what to think or what to say, nor do they provide direct answers to questions. Elders teach lessons about life through stories. Elders are the best listeners in our culture. Elders hear everything!

Many grandparents participate in raising children. In a small Native community, it is important to know who is raising the children. Today, it is not unusual to have a Kindergarten class filled with children being raised by the grandparents. If this is the case, the teacher needs to understand the parenting styles of both grandparents and parents. Differences exist between these generations, but both are concerned about the well-being of their children. The children may be raised by extended family members throughout their childhood.

Grandparents may be lenient about raising their grandchildren. Children are not denied anything, and are allowed to do whatever they want to do within reason. However, if inappropriate behaviours occur, nonverbal messages of disapproval are given to the child. Legends and stories are also used to teach children about appropriate and inappropriate behaviours and consequences for their actions. Cree language may be the first language of the grandparents. Children value the language that is spoken to them in their upbringing. Grandparents are concerned about the influences of the media and mainstream society on their grandchildren. Children may act out in a negative manner when they are adjusting to the different discipline practices between school and home.

Some Native parents may lack traditional parenting skills due to their residential school experiences. The teacher needs to be aware that children are influenced by the grieving and healing experiences of their parents and be kind and understanding during these experiences.

Children provide a constant source of inspiration and potential. Children are our gifts. Our prayers and our best personal and professional efforts cultivate a loving and successful pathway of learning for them.

Kindergarten: En Français

Denise Gagné Williamson

At the beginning of the school year, in French Immersion Kindergarten, I often have the feeling that I'm talking to the wall. I understand that total immersion, without any translation of instructions, is the best approach. I also understand that this can be disconcerting to some children.

It is now the middle of October, and for the last four weeks I've been singing the most active, engaging French songs possible; partly as a classroom management technique, and partly to help children associate the sung vocabulary with the action. I'm sure half of the class thought their teacher was crazy when, on the first day of school I started singing "La petite grenouille" and hopped around the classroom like a frog. Luckily, several of the children were intrigued enough to join in with the actions. Slowly, they began recognizing that certain sounds (e.g., Na-na-na-na-na) always had the same movements (standing on one foot and waving your arms in the air). These days we're kind of "singing" together . . . well, close approximations anyway.

The spoken word is a little trickier. I basically pantomime every word that comes out of my mouth. I also adhere in every detail to a daily routine. This allows the children to connect the flow of one activity to the next, even when they don't understand my instructions.

Today we were over by the paint centre, discussing the bulletin board created out of the children's own finger paintings, that demonstrated the effects of mixing colours. There were more than a few who had obviously had enough of trying to make sense of those sounds coming out of my mouth. I gave up on this activity and announced "C'est le temps des centres mes amis." One little girl, Madeline, instantly said "Yahoo! Centre time!" There's a mad rush to the carpet area. My jaw drops. She understood what I said!

This is a teachable moment that I cannot ignore. I ask, in English, "How did you know it was centre time, Madeline?" Very pleased with herself, she responded "Well, teacher, the word you say sounds a little bit like "centres," and anyway, we always go to centers after gym."

"Wow!" I exclaim "You've really been paying attention! Do you know that you've discovered the secret to learning French, Madeline?" Everyone is absolutely attentive. They too, have been trying to find the magic key that would open those French doors for them. I pretend that I'm only engaged in a conversation with Madeline and ignore the 23 eavesdroppers. "It starts with one word, or even one sound that suddenly makes sense to you. When you hear that word you just know what to do. After that, you hear a different sound that you remember. Then it gets easier and easier to hear the words inside of the sounds. Pretty soon, you'll understand everything I say. Good for you, Madeline! You are a very smart girl!"

Madeline beams and I breathe a sigh of relief. It's begun!

Ali's Story

Stacey Rayment

Ali's arrival in my class was not noticeably different from that of any other child. She entered the classroom shyly. She was curious about the new school year. I learned that Ali was already a beginning reader. She enjoyed being with her friends. One of the things that Ali loved most about the class was that she was given the opportunity to choose her own partner. Sometimes, when children were finding places to work in our classroom, there were quiet arguments about who would sit beside Ali. When we selected partners at the carpet before finding a place to work; Ali would often find her arms being pulled in different directions by children who wanted to work with her. During centre time, Ali often visited the craft centre, the dress-up centre or the puppet centre. Many children chose whatever centre Ali chose. The interesting thing about Ali's situation was that her popularity was exclusively with boys.

I began to watch Ali. I wondered why her friends were always boys. As I thought about Ali, I tried to consider who she was in her story. She was already reading before she came to school. She felt a little bit nervous about her reading skills because it seemed to set her apart from her classroom community. Ali lived with her parents and her older brother. Ali often spent time after school with her babysitter, Debi. Debi also had a daughter, Jessica, who was in our classroom. Ali and Jessica played well together after school but the two girls didn't spend any school time together. Ali was well liked by all of the children in our community. She was accepted by any of the children as a group member or partner; but given the opportunity to choose, Ali always chose to work or play with boys.

When I think about Ali's play, I now realize that her actions were characteristic of the play I often associated with boys. She could be heard creating puppet plays that modelled the violent superhero play of the cartoons. She was a leader among the children with whom she spent time; she often directed the exciting action of the puppet plays. Ali was included in private conversations with boys in the coatroom or at a table. In the spring, Ali and one of her male playmates found themselves in trouble with the principal for some dangerous play during the lunch hour. Ali's parents were uncertain about how to manage the situation with Ali. Her mom was overwhelmed by Ali's exclusive involvement in boy's play. I wondered how Ali's involvement would have been perceived differently, if she had been a boy who only wanted to play with girls.

Part way through the year, I had a conversation with Ali's mom about Ali's social relationships. She was concerned that there was not a balance between girls and boys in Ali's selection of friends. Unsure what to do, Ali's parents considered insisting that any friends she had over after school had to be girls. Together, we wondered what kind of sense Ali would make of such a restriction. Up until school, Ali's mom was responsible for setting up social interactions for Ali. This year, Ali began to arrange her own social events. It was at this time that her preference for male friends emerged. I began to watch Ali more carefully. I wrote in my journal about Ali. I noted that when I sometimes assigned partners, Ali was willing to work with girls and was welcomed into groups by the other girls. Her work with boys seemed to be her preference, but she did not insist on only working with boys.

As the school year passed, I continued to write about Ali in my journal. As I reflect on my journal entries, I am filled with a sense of uncertainty. As I wrote about her, I wondered about the choices that Ali made. I wondered about the environments that Ali had been part of previous to school. I wondered about the way that I structure play and other interactions in my classroom. I wondered what advice I had to offer her parents and what conversations we should have with Ali. I wondered about Ali's rejection of girl's play. I wondered if the classroom community we had created was considerate of gender in a positive way. As I wondered about Ali, I became aware of my own assumptions of girl's play and boy's play. I am pleased to have met Ali. From her story I have begun to learn more about my expectations of the roles boys and girls adopt as characters in classroom communities. I am still searching for answers to my questions about girls and boys playing together and apart, and what that means for all of the children in our early childhood programs.

Multiage Grouping

Sue McKenzie-Robblee

"There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in." Graham Greene.

Multiage classrooms and multiage learning activities are a celebration of differences. This is a time and opportunity for children, as learners, to learn about themselves in context of the world around them. They gain understanding and develop attitudes which they can then contribute to the learning environment. Children have the chance to find their place, know where they fit and where they can grow and flourish. In our multiage classes, children comment that it is nice to have so many friends that they can call on to help them to solve problems, to ask questions and to understand the application of what they are learning. Transitions are minimized and continuity in learning is enhanced as children appreciate and recognize the skills and abilities of themselves and others.

The power of a combined classroom is that it allows children to learn at different rates and work at their own developmental level. It is a philosophy built on a foundation that recognizes the unique abilities and gifts of each child. The emphasis is placed on individual differences within small flexible groupings where student interaction and hands-on activities enhance learning.

I was standing in the hallway of the school. The bell had rung and the children's voices were bubbling throughout the hallway. I watched with wonder as I listened to the conversation between two young boys. They were discussing "colours" and how to make new colours from other familiar ones. They were hypothesizing and speculating as to the process that might be used during their time as scientists when they were in their "science laboratory."

I popped into the classroom later in the morning. The young scientists were donning their "lab coats" and were preparing their workspaces. In small groups, the children were explaining to one another the process for adding food colouring to a mixture of water and oil to create new colours. All of the children thought of themselves as scientists working together to solve a problem and to answer the testable question that they had set for themselves.

The learning environment was one in which the children were willing to take risks and to be responsible for their learning and their environment. It was important to them. When I looked a little more closely, what also became apparent was that the children were doing different activities with differing expectations within the general content of "colours."

In a combined grouping, curriculum is used as a framework and as a structure for weaving the knowledge of what children can do with their interests and abilities. This creates a continuum for continual growth as children with different strengths and interests work together.

Happy Birthday, Christian!

Karen Pederson-Bayus

We had a wonderful party today. Christian celebrated his 6th birthday with five friends. There were three from his Kindergarten class. The children were so excited when they came to our house. Luisa arrived first, with her mother carrying the pizzas they were donating for the party from the family business. Grinning from ear to ear, Luisa gave Christian a big hug, then proudly signed "birthday" for her mother. Pamela came next, also running to Christian to give him a hug. Robbie and Eric followed, then Devin a little later, after his hockey game.
The children clammered into the basement to make crafts and play games. Christian marched confidently around the room during "Musical Pillowcases," and they laughed when in the end they all had to sit on one pillow case. After making snowman hats and playing "Pin the Tail on the Donkey," it was time for pizza and cake. There was so much noise while the children were waiting at the table, blowing on their noise-makers and chanting "We want pizza!" Christian was in the thick of it all.

Over six years ago, my husband and I were told that Christian would be born with Down's syndrome. We awaited his birth with a mixture of excitement and apprehension. If we had only known then what a Kindergartner he would be! Looking at the happy little faces around the table today, we think how great it is for Christian to be "just one of the kids." He is fortunate to be a fully included member of his class, participating in every aspect of the Kindergarten program. More importantly, he has friends like Luisa, Pamela and Devin who like, and even choose, to be with him.

Christian has developed so many skills. He is able to complete crafts and activities during workshop time, with minimal assistance. He can print his name independently, knows his telephone number, plays well with his friends during centre time, reads over 150 words and interacts independently with a computer, using a mouse. It doesn't matter that his speech is difficult to understand and that he communicates with a mixture of sign language and single words. All the children in his class are learning some signs and they communicate with Christian just fine. Pamela's mother remarked to me that Pamela told her that she has lots of friends in Kindergarten, but she LOVES Christian. What can be more wonderful than seeing your child happy and included with friends who care about him. Christian's birthday party was a big hit and everyone had lots of fun.

"He Sang Every Song"

Anne Eshpeter

During a school concert, each of my Kindergarten students had a special role to play. Cameron was the donkey who had to carry Mary on his back to Bethlehem. He announced to the audience that he had a hard job to do but he assured everyone that he was strong and could do what he had to do very well. After the program, Cameron's mother came up to me and with a hug she exclaimed, "He sang every song!"

Cameron came to our preschool from the hospital, where he had been assessed as having ocular motor apraxia, possible oral motor planning disorder, language delay and fine motor delay. Cameron could speak, but his speech was, for the most part, unintelligible. It was suggested that the parents should use a picture board and sign language to help him develop his skills.

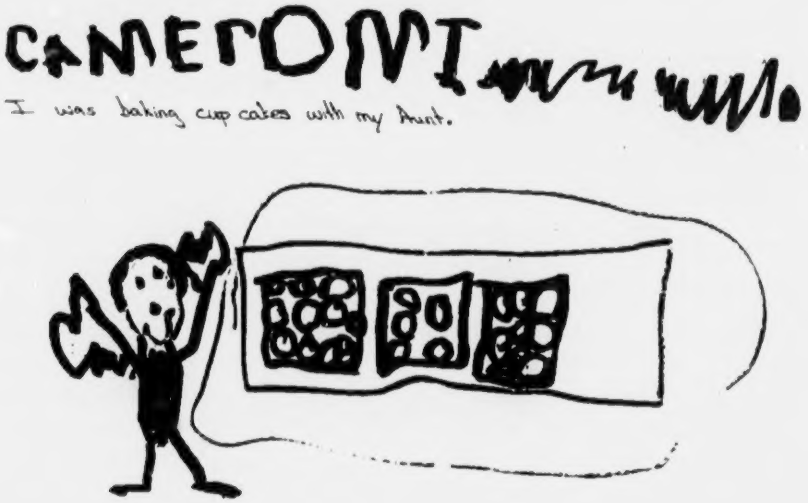
With the significant findings and recommendations of the preschool staff, an individual program plan was set up to challenge Cameron's strengths and meet his needs. The process was of utmost importance. The team concentrated on what Cameron was to learn and how they could teach him. They felt that a preschool, literacy-rich program was one of the strongest tools that would help Cameron grow.

And indeed, Cameron did grow. Let me tell you what a typical day in Kindergarten is like for Cameron. Once Cameron gets off the bus and enters the school, he takes off his outerwear independently. Then he enters the classroom, finds his name, greets the teachers and his classmates nearby, who are putting their runners on. He has learned "The Circle Song" and joins in enthusiastically. Next, he goes through the calendar and weather chart, using sign language and verbal communication. Cameron identifies the book of the week by title, using the illustrations on the cover to help him. Today, the children will identify the sequence of the story. The teacher will record their ideas using words and pictorial illustrations.

Chanting is an effective tool for language development. Cameron initially found this to be very difficult. During workshop time, when one-on-one attention is given, Cameron has been able to overcome his difficulties and is now able to join the large group. Also, through interactive charts, he has learned to focus on directionality, spacing, punctuation, letter recognition, rhyming words and other strategies for language development. When charts are animated with voice and enthusiastic actions, the language "game" is nourishing for Cameron.

Cameron not only learns from small group activities or one-on-one with a speech-language pathologist and an occupational therapist, but he also learns through his self-directed activities in the numerous centres.

In the pattern centre that has rubber stamps, ink pads and multilink shapes he chooses three rubber stamps to create an ABC pattern on paper. He prints his name, using a block system, and then reads the pattern to the teacher assistant. Next, he stops at the ABC magnetic board and chooses to match the letters of a word on a picture card. He moves along to the manipulative centre where he creates a setting that invites another child for language interaction. Now he is able to communicate and socialize with his peers. Cameron likes to illustrate in his journal, and he decides to join the children who are at the writing centre. Because we are celebrating his birthday tomorrow, he has been busy making cupcakes with his aunt. Now he illustrates that scene, using coloured markers. He scribbles a sentence, using the pronoun "I" and ending with correct punctuation. Cameron does much better now than he did a year ago, when one of the teacher assistants followed him centre to centre, adjusting the activities so that he could be successful.



I was baking cup cakes with my Aunt.

Another learning tool that was instrumental in Cameron's progress was a functional sight-reading program, which his mother began at home. The computer also provided an opportunity to learn the language through a software program.

The various materials used to formulate a Kindergarten curriculum for a child with special needs contribute to an environment that effectively guides and promotes language and fine motor development. Motivation, improved self-confidence and autonomy expand as children experience success.

Cameron's is one story. We hope that the joyous praise, "He sang every song," may be repeated again and again by parents, therapists, teachers and teacher assistants who care and do not give up.

Teachers Working Together

Pat Hogan
Gayl Inouye
Paul Kopf

When we met Hai in the fall of 1995, we immediately became concerned about how he would make a place for himself within the classroom community. Although Hai was born in Canada, his entry into kindergarten must have seemed much like arriving in a foreign country. Since his birth, Hai and his Vietnamese-speaking mother had led a secluded life in their tiny apartment in the inner city. He had limited exposure to people who spoke English and almost no experience with other children. Hai's mother fussed over him, changing his clothes, washing his face and hands and feeding him. She had taught him to write his name, but he didn't seem to know what to do with crayons, markers or paints.

We were a newly formed team of teachers intent on creating a primary program with 20 Kindergarten children and a multiaged group of 50 students in years one and two. We had partially integrated the Kindergarten children the previous June and were encouraged by the results. The year two students seemed to thrive in leadership roles and the year one students were beginning to see themselves as potential "teachers" for younger children. The kindergarten students also seemed to flourish within the larger group. They were inspired to attempt many new tasks because the older children were there to model for them and to assist them.

In the fall, we began integrating the kindergarten children during centre time. The children were free to visit centres in any of our classrooms. Hai, in those early days, seldom ventured out of the kindergarten classroom. Other Vietnamese-speaking children would attempt to engage his interest, but he preferred to remain close to his teacher and to another child who was virtually silent at school. When we began putting all the children together for a block of time several mornings a week, Hai seemed overwhelmed. From our experience with non-English speaking children, we knew that they usually relied on other students to interpret our instructions and conversations. Hai, however, did not ask for assistance from other Vietnamese-speaking children nor did he observe other children's actions to take cues about what was expected of him. He sat quietly, seemingly unresponsive and disengaged.

We saw the first evidence of progress with Hai when we were able to involve another teacher and organize the children into four smaller Kindergarten to Grade 2 groups for our integrated block. Each group participated in a series of lessons with one teacher, in what we came to call "Art Studios." Through drawing, painting, claymation and performing arts studios, the children exceeded our expectations in terms of their achievement as artists and in terms of their belief in themselves. They came to see themselves as artists and they felt free to experiment and take risks. We were pleased with the range of possibilities we could offer through the studio work and we saw the children benefit from working in studios long enough to improve their skills and to have some depth of experience.

As the children worked together in their studios, they functioned as a learning community. During discussions of their studio work, children offered positive critiques of one another's work, asked questions about each other's technique and incorporated each other's ideas in subsequent creations. Though still silent within the group, Hai discovered he could draw well and he seemed to enjoy the comments other children made about his work. He willingly experimented in all art studies and began to watch what other children were attempting in their work. We were delighted when Hai decided to extend what he was doing in art studios by choosing activities such as drawing and painting during centre time.

As a team, we felt successful in engaging the interest and involvement of children. We seemed to have found a way to value the images they created to represent what they knew. We wanted to work with science in a similar way. With a student teacher who joined our team, we created five "science labs" where children could experiment with ideas about water, sand and soil, insects and worms, plants and weather. In these labs, we saw Hai more actively involved in learning through hands-on activities. He began to speak. Often his words were uttered in response to his excitement over what he was doing. He would cry, "Teacher! Look!" when an experiment he was attempting showed him something new about the world. He became increasingly involved in interaction with other children and he made attempts to document his growing understanding through drawings and by dictating labels for his drawings. By the time June arrived, Hai was a member of the classroom community.

Over the summer Hai seemed to lose a little of his comfort and competence with English. He spent two months isolated from other children, and dependent on his mother. When he returned to our program as a year one student, his mother wanted to spend her mornings with him in class. In her eagerness to be a good mother she coached him to answer questions and participate in discussions. Her attempts only seemed to discourage Hai, who initially displayed many of the withdrawn behaviours we had seen at the beginning of Kindergarten. Through an interpreter we spoke with Hai's mother and explained how she could help him by letting him be more independent. When she understood our concerns, she stopped acting for him and Hai began to show us he was familiar with our routines and expectations, with the rules of the classroom and with the company of many of his classmates. Now, after five months of year one, Hai is developing confidence in his ability to express himself. He talks easily with other children and he is willing to speak during class discussions and class meetings. He is also willing to help others as well as do things for himself. He has several friends.

We are still watching Hai closely, but we are no longer worried about his ability to find a place within the classroom community. Hai becomes increasingly secure as he gains confidence in himself as a learner and as he develops competence with English. As he grows and develops, Hai helps our team figure out what kinds of learning opportunities to offer children and how to create a place for each child within the community.

Kindergarten and Day Care: Partners in Early Learning

Eunice Querengesser

It is 8:15 a.m. In the next 3½ hours my co-workers and I will serve morning snack, discuss medication and child care concerns with parents, put away day care toys and replace them with Kindergarten centres. We will put out 20 cots, set the tables for lunch and provide a 2½ hour Kindergarten program complete with outdoor play. Teaching in a multipurpose classroom has its challenges.

The Kindergarten program in a day care is like a Kindergarten program anywhere else. Our program is funded by Alberta Learning and follows its program guidelines. During Kindergarten hours I am fortunate to work with two trained and dedicated early childhood educators. Kindergarten programming provides our team with opportunities to work with children individually and in small and large group settings. All the staff are aware of the Kindergarten program's goals and philosophies as well as the children's strengths and areas of need. We meet once a week to plan and to discuss program goals as well as the children's progress.

As a Kindergarten teacher, I plan a program to assist children in all developmental areas. Day care routines also provide many teachable moments. Sometimes it just takes time, practice and patience to see the opportunities for incidental learning. For example, "Quick, put the toys away so we can get ready for Kindergarten!" has been replaced with a calm transition time in which children and staff work together to set up for Kindergarten. Instead of "Hurry, let's get ready to go outside!" we take advantage of the opportunity to practice self-help and dressing skills. Opportunities to learn self-help, mathematics, and language skills abound in setting out cots and tables. Children match bed numbers to lists of names, read name tags at tables, and practise one-to-one correspondence by matching plates, cups and cutlery. These activities also help children develop a sense of pride and accomplishment by allowing them to be "special helpers" for the day.

Children attending Kindergarten in a day care setting with trained early childhood educators benefit from valuable early learning experiences throughout the day. A wonderful continuity exists in our classroom. Afternoon programming reflects the goals and philosophies of our Kindergarten program. Morning themes and discussions often complement and expand on earlier student learning.

As the lunch tables are being cleared, I reflect on the wonderful learning experiences that the children have been exposed to throughout their morning. Having worked hard to plan and implement a well-balanced and exciting Kindergarten program, I know that they will benefit from those early learning experiences for the rest of their lives. I also think about all the unplanned learning they acquired through participating in the activities of the day care. I am reminded of the goals and philosophies of Early Childhood Education that talk about designing programs around the needs and the interests of the children. I feel content knowing my partners at the day care and I are working together to ensure that the needs of children are being met.

Sam's Day at Kindergarten

Margaret Brooks

Sam was awake early. Today was the day his teacher would bring in the pond water. For the previous three days, Sam and his two friends had been busy at the woodwork bench measuring, cutting and nailing together the 2 × 4s that would be the edges of their classroom pond. Making sure the wood was the right length to fit the table top was the most difficult part of their task—not because they didn't know how to measure, but because they each had thought of the best way to measure and could not decide which method to use. The plans they drew with Mrs. B before they started, helped keep them true to their task and showed them that there were four sides to be cut. That meant each child could try their theory for one side and still have one left over. Sawing 2 × 4s was hard work even with the bigger and sharper saws Mrs. B brought in especially for this job. They knew from their experiences with sawing that they had to cut straight down the line or the wood would not fit together well. They took turns to help each other and, like the true carpenters they believed themselves to be, they scheduled "coffee breaks" at the snack table. Sam enjoyed the responsibility of deciding when he could take his snack and of setting out his own napkin and washing up after himself. When the frame was finished, Mrs. B helped them tape it to the top of the biggest table and line it with plastic ready for the pond water. As they stood back to admire their handiwork, Sam experienced the pride and satisfaction of having contributed to such a challenging and purposeful project. His teacher's confidence in them had helped the children work together and do a good job.

Mrs. B was bringing the water from the pond on her acreage. Sam knew just the spot she might take the water from. It was where they had found the frog eggs. He hoped she would bring some frog eggs too. The previous week Mrs. B had invited his class and their families to her house to see the pond and have a bonfire supper. This was their second visit to her house. In the fall, two beavers were busy building a lodge on her pond and the whole class had stood at the edge in the trees and watched them. Sam had been very surprised that beavers were so big and that they had cut down so many trees. Mrs. B had invited the children into her house, and they were allowed to explore her children's rooms. Before Sam had been to Mrs. B's house he had often wondered where she lived. She was always at school when he arrived and was there after he left. Seeing her at home somehow made her more real, more understandable.

Sam arrived at school a little early. He was able to help Mrs. B empty the large blue jugs of pond water into the tabletop pond. Mrs. B had already collected many reference books and displayed them on the table beside the pond. There was a reference chart on the wall with lots of pond insects labelled to help children with identification. Sam helped Mrs. B put fresh drawing paper in the clip boards around the pond and sharpened the drawing pencils. Sam knew that this was the first place he wanted to work after the morning meeting. After that he thought he might like to build the pond, the trees all around, the house and the road with unit blocks.

The other children were arriving now. Sam and his friends spent time looking for signs of life in the murky water until all the class had arrived. Sam usually enjoyed the morning meeting. It helped him to decide what he should be working on as well as to become aware of some of the things he might have missed in the room. This morning, however, he couldn't wait to get back to the pond.

At the meeting, Mrs. B brought out the big book the children had made together after the visit to her house. They had each illustrated a page for the book and Mrs. B had written their story in large black letters for all the class to see. Sam's page had a drawing of himself and his family sitting around the bonfire. He could read the words that Mrs. B had written, "My family is sitting 'round the bonfire." He thought he could almost remember the words on some of the other pages too. They had read the book together on several days, with some of the children taking turns to hold the pointer. After the story was read, Mrs. B reminded everyone of the tasks they began yesterday and discussed some of the new activities that were available today. Each child had a place to go to, a task to do and a back-up plan. They knew that they would have the next hour and a half to work without being interrupted by things like recess or snack. It was worth their while getting really involved in what they were doing. They also knew that many of the activities were going to be around for several days, so there was no rush to try to do everything today. Besides, Mrs. B liked to invite children back to an activity to explore things that she might have added to it.

Sam joined his carpenter friends at the pond. He put the drawing board aside for the moment. First he just wanted to look. Mrs. B joined them and just looked too. She noticed that the silt was settling to the bottom and that the water was getting clearer. The pieces of duck weed were floating on the top with their long roots dangling down. Sam liked the way Mrs. B talked about what she saw and what she was doing. At first he thought it strange because his parents didn't do that, but soon he realized that her talking gave him some good ideas. Suddenly Sam found what he had hoped would be there. A small clump of clear jelly balls with squiggly black dots in them—frogs eggs! Everyone crowded 'round to see. Sam knew he had to record this special event so he took his clipboard and very carefully drew the frog eggs. Mrs. B sat down and drew the duck weed she had seen. Sam had learned a lot about drawing from watching her draw. Drawing was an important way of letting others know what you were thinking about. Mrs. B was always interested in children's drawings and seemed to know that children Sam's age often drew better than they wrote. Mrs. B wrote the words "frog eggs" on a card and put it up on the wallboard above the pond for him and others to copy. She also put up "duck weed, " "pond," "I found" and "I see." Sam and his friends were so interested in what was in the pond that they stayed there looking and drawing for a whole hour. Sam made six drawings with labels. Mrs. B put one drawing from each child up on the wall board. The rest Sam date stamped and saved in his locker to make into the special kind of a book Mrs. B told them about—a diary. Mrs. B had remembered the baby album that Sam showed her when she visited his house before school started. She suggested that Sam keep a sort of baby album of the baby frogs because the children were like parents to the baby frogs now.

Then Sam remembered that he wanted to build the pond with unit blocks. He invited Tess to work with him. She was good at building houses and he liked to play with her.

Tess's friend Lauren wanted to join in too, but Sam was not sure this was a good idea. Just as they began to argue about it, Mrs. B came by and stopped to listen. She sat down with them and helped them talk about the problem. She invited a solution from each child and soon everyone had a role and they began to work on the pond. The house and the beaver lodge were underway.

Sam had been so involved in what he was doing that he almost forgot snack. Snack would have to wait until last thing today. Before Sam went for snack he carefully put away the pond and trees. While Sam was enjoying the fruit that one of the parents had provided, Mrs. B was gently letting other children know that they had five minutes to finish their activity before helping with clean up. Sam had already cleaned up his activity so he looked around for someone else to help.

Before taking the class outside for games or to the gymnasium for gymnastics, Mrs. B called the class together to review the day. Sam was able to let everyone know that there were frog eggs in the pond and that he planned to keep a diary about them. He listened carefully to some of the things other children had been doing. He might like to try one of these things some day. Reviewing the day helped Sam remember some of the important activities so he could tell his mom and dad when they asked about what he did today.

Sam enjoyed the last half hour of the day. It was a time for him to work with his whole class either at music activities or physical education activities. When his mom came to get him at home time, he took her to see the frog eggs and his drawings. Tomorrow he would look to see if the eggs had changed.

The Teacher Assistant in Kindergarten

Margaret Simmons

The first time I met a teacher assistant in a Kindergarten classroom was when my own children took the quantum leap into the world of formal education at the tender age of five. There I witnessed a compassionate and supportive teacher assistant who did everything from tying shoelaces, to reading stories, to conferring with parents. She maintained a positive and close working relationship with the teacher and together they worked in the Kindergarten classroom as a well-orchestrated team. When I recently saw this fine educator after some years, with a smile and enthusiasm, she inquired about each of my children by name. I am grateful that this teacher assistant was a positive and contributing member to my own children's early educational experience.

When I subsequently entered the world of Kindergarten as a teacher assistant with certificate training, I was keenly aware of the effect I was having on young children's lives. I am still constantly amazed at how tiny and vulnerable Kindergarten children are in relation to the other students in their schools. We educators and caregivers have a great responsibility to ensure children's physical and emotional well-being while they are in our care. I feel empathy for parents who, with wrenching difficulty, give us the hand of their youngster. They walk away, all the while looking back and asking themselves whether they are doing the right thing, leaving their child with the right people, and wondering how their child will fare without them. I remember bringing my oldest child to her first day of Kindergarten and thinking that when I picked her up at lunch she would never be the same little girl again. By then she would have one small foot out in a very large world. Saying goodbye that morning put closure on a precious preschool time with her that we would never again have together. I remember needing to trust the teacher and her assistant at that time. Many parents need as much comfort and encouragement as do their small offspring on those first days of Kindergarten. Taking a moment to communicate with parents and provide support, is often one of the most important ways we start our days as teacher assistants.

I closely observe what transpires as parents leave their children behind and pick them up again. It speaks volumes, often providing indications of what we as assistants, together with teachers, may need to deal with. Often it is the small, sheltered, reluctant individuals we spend a lot of time with building social and emotional skills. On the other hand, there are also youngsters who arrive alone each day, having crossed streets by themselves, hungry and disheveled. As a teacher assistant, it is my responsibility to teach routines for hand washing, combing hair, pulling up socks, and finding healthy snacks. These children remind me why I chose to work in an educational setting. If parents are their children's first teachers, then surely Kindergarten teachers and their assistants are a close second.

I believe that my role as teacher assistant parallels the role of the classroom teacher. I see myself as a member of a classroom team that teaches, implements the Kindergarten program, supervises students and leads them in organized activities. One Kindergarten teacher told me, "I am my assistant and my assistant is me. Our roles are interchangeable." I am often responsible for maintaining anecdotal records, completing checklists and having input into individualized education plans. Through observation of the students, I have input into evaluation and student assessment. The teacher and I confer daily and plan strategies together to facilitate the progress of children.

I have learned so much from my students—from their similarities and differences. As I listened to Alice reading aloud to a partner, my hand covered Nicholas's because he had trouble grasping a pencil, and together we formed the letter of his name. I thought of the many things that young hand would one day write, if only I could get him to hold his pencil on his own. I gave him modelling clay to manipulate during story time to strengthen the muscles in his hands and witnessed him becoming quite possessive of these small balls of coloured clay. They made him feel special. Then there was John, who didn't want to participate in any organized activity or centre time, but just wanted to crawl in my lap and twist my hair around his fingers. He seemed so tiny and so young. I liked to wrap my arms around him and, for a second in time, provide a safe, warm nest before letting him go and encouraging him once again to spread his wings. This is the real stuff that fills the minutes and hours of the working life of the Kindergarten assistant. Each day we encourage small, dependent people to take tiny steps toward one day becoming big, independent people.

As a Kindergarten teacher assistant, I found it critical to possess a comprehensive knowledge of children and their development. As a parent, I had accepted that children simply did the things they do because they are individuals. As a trained assistant, however, I am aware that many things children do are important elements of their development and these actions and behaviours can often be quite clearly interpreted. And now, when I observe students engaged in solitary or parallel play, interacting with the group, sharing, lining up, listening, taking turns and taking risks, it is much more meaningful to me. It also shows me where I can teach, intervene, help, model and share with them. Above all, I must meet them exactly where they are and then help them move forward. Together with the teacher, I share responsibility for building the foundation for lifelong learning. Kindergarten must be a positive, progressive experience for children. Above all, Kindergarten has to be a joyful, safe place "where I can always learn new things," as one youngster told me.

To receive spontaneous hugs, to dry tears, to hold warm, damp hands and to be offered a bite of a not so fresh cookie at recess, is to know abundance. It is to be a teacher assistant in Kindergarten.

Parents in Partnership

Sandy Lancaster
Monica Donadt-Milne

At the beginning of November, we hold a general Kindergarten meeting to provide parents with information about the assessment process at our school and what to expect at their first child/parent/teacher conference. These conferences are partially led by the children. Parents who are informed on the process of the conference are better equipped to ask questions and participate. We also stress the importance of the role of parents as their child's first teacher, saying

> *Many of the things that make children ready for Kindergarten are most effectively learned from parents: their interest in the world around them, their ideas about themselves and others, their ability to communicate, and their attitude toward school, teachers and learning itself. When you become involved in your child's education, it sends a powerful message, that both they, and their education, are important to you—and this is something that they can't learn from anyone else.*

At this first conference the parents are asked to introduce their child to us in any format they choose. At the general meeting they are given examples of ways to make introductions and a list of guiding questions to help them with this project. We encourage them to work with their child. This experience always proves to be a positive and successful one for everybody. It also provides us with valuable information about new students and their families. It opens the door and sets a warm, friendly tone for the entire school year.

We have been treated to a "Pizza Party" with pizzas made by dad and son; we heard stories of Stuart and his brother while we ate the delicious pizza. We were surprised when a "Little House on the Prairie" character appeared at another conference. Linda was dressed in calico and lace, with flour on her checks. She carried a rolling pin and a tray of warm cinnamon buns. We, of course, enjoyed the buns and heard about a family's love for baking and reading together. Later, we were entertained with a lively "musical rap" (in which we learned a little about ostrich farming) sung by mom and daughter, with dad keeping time. We heard a heartfelt, touching letter written and read by a dad to his daughter, and we have enjoyed countless stories told through special toys, photograph albums, collages or biographical books written by parent and child.

This introduction is a wonderful way of encouraging parents to become actively involved, from the beginning, in their child's learning. The project allows them to focus on becoming better thinkers, listeners and observers about—and with—their children, and initiates the connections between learning at home and school.

After the conference, parents may reflect on the experience and ask questions. An example of one reflection came in the form of a letter that powerfully illustrates the impact of this experience, and how important it is for parents to be included and involved.

> *[the conference time] . . . did nothing less than bring more confidence, courage and good feelings to Allison. You gave her mother and dad a tremendous boost, as well. Nothing could have had us feeling better in our roles as parents than what you said that day. In essence, you told us that we, as the two people most responsible for giving our children guidance and direction, are doing a great job in leading Allison toward a life of independence, interdependence, and fulfillment.*

Children Working with an Occupational Therapist

Kate Yelle Watt

Kindergarten is a great opportunity for me to focus on process and not product. Groups within the classroom or special small groups function at a variety of levels. The particular group I work with has a wide range of abilities. Scott is moving from scribbling to making isolated forms. Nicholas makes one round form but is now adding steps to make more complicated forms. Christian has diagonals to conquer and Jacob and Cam are trying to build forms into pictures.

Today's task is to make, cut and decorate holiday trees. I wondered how to work on this task with children at different skill levels. The children took several paths; there could be many more.

Triangular stencils help to guide forms for some. Scott is given big dots (cookies we call them) to mark his way from corner to corner. A monkey, from the barrel of monkeys, marks the inside of the tree to indicate where he is to go around. Manipulatives provide critical meaning for Scott. The markers don't feel good to Scott, so he chooses chalk. Nicholas needs to exert more pressure, so a big crayon works best; and for Christian, the primary pencil prepares him for future printing. Jake and Cam choose their favourite colour of marker and follow the outside of triangular stencils.

Now, we have triangles to cut. Once I take some large excess paper away from the triangle for Christian, he is on his way. I may outline beside his pencil marks to help him cut on a straighter line. That cookie dot comes in handy for Nicholas who needs to learn to cut and turn. His line is made thick and "thumbs up" tells him how to hold his hand. Scott's can of tools has loop scissors. That's his crocodile that opens its mouth to eat my paper. For Scott, cutting across the paper is a success to celebrate.

Glue time, and Christian's on a roll. For Nicholas, the glue stick takes a trip from one dot to another. Scott glues a shaded area on the paper because the concept of turning over the paper is just emerging for him.

Now more fun; it's decoration time! Sparkle glue is thrilling. Christian makes small circles while Nicholas creates stripes. For Scott pushing the glue out builds tone in his hands, and he makes beautiful decorative balls. Two balls are enough hard work for Scott, so he finishes off with easy moving daubers. Jake and Cam express their creativity by using a combination of all techniques.

Now a signature. Scott follows a model and stamps his name. Nicholas builds an N with sticks, then prints "N" in a big shaded box, and we take turns with the other letters of his name. Straight line letters are done by Nicholas, imitating one stroke at a time. A and S need a bit of my hand over his and we are done. Christian copies a model of lower case letters with smaller block forms. It is hard to remember that small "n" has bumps, not slides like "N," so we practice that letter in the rice tray first. Scott's excitement over his own name is overwhelming. I show him three envelopes with three children's names typed on them. He easily finds his own and reaches inside to take out his name strip. Together we turn it over, put glue on it and try to get it turned the right way. Jake and Cam practise making small letters and keeping their name contained in a box shape.

We have done it! Yes, a lot of different tools lie around the table and a lot of skills have been tapped. This is not precision art, but DYNAMIC art—truly created in a unique way by each unique individual. It will never be done again the same way or look the same. Hopefully, at another time, for another group of children, though, it will end with the same feeling. And that is the feeling of success!

A Day in the Life of a Speech-Language Pathologist

Tami Reimer

It was an ordinary Friday afternoon in December. I was to spend part of the afternoon with the preschool children, and part of the afternoon with the Kindergarten children. As I sat in my office attending to a few last minute details before the preschoolers arrived, Nicholas walked past my door on the way to his classroom. He saw me, and smiled his cute little smile before flying down the rest of the hallway. I sat there and thought, "Wow! What great social interaction Nicholas just displayed!"

Nicholas never ceases to amaze me each time I see him. Nicholas is a five year old boy who has autism. He has age-appropriate speech development (the production of sounds), but delayed language development. Nicholas started preschool two and a half years ago. At that time, in order for him to cope with the demands placed on him in the classroom, he needed a full-time teacher assistant with him. A few months later, he no longer required that type of support. He is currently attending a regular Kindergarten along with a few other special needs children. They have the support of two teacher assistants, an occupational therapist and myself, a speech therapist.

Once a week, I take each child with identified special needs for individual therapy. Usually I work on their speech development. Since Nicholas's speech is age appropriate, I work on some specific language goals that Nicholas is having difficulty with. These are usually language activities that are more conducive to working one-on-one than in a group setting. In this way he gets more turns and is allowed longer wait time than when he works in a group. Sometimes, I will spend time with Nicholas in the classroom during center time, observing how he is interacting with the other children and the adults in the class and working on social skills and language through whatever activity he is engaged in. Nicholas is starting to be able to talk about remote events, so occasionally, I will pop into the classroom during snack time and sit down and chat with him to encourage this emerging skill.

The last 20 to 25 minutes of the Kindergarten day are dedicated to small group time. During this time, the occupational therapist will take two days a week to work with children on fine motor skills, and I will take the other two days to work on language skills. Since language is being learned within the classroom as well as with me (not to mention at home, and during all other aspects of the child's day), I strive to support and enhance the language that is being learned elsewhere. If a child is presented with new information in the context of old or familiar information, he or she will be able to make connections and retain the new information to a much greater degree. By old or familiar information, I mean a theme in Kindergarten that is familiar to all of the children regardless of their background or types of information they have been exposed to at home. I use the current theme to plan activities for the goals I am working on. On this particular day, I reviewed the "Gingerbread Man" story; all of the children chanted the repetitive parts together. Each child then took on the role of one of the characters and acted out the story, saying their lines.

We met several speech and language goals during this activity: vocabulary development of the names for characters and objects in the story, practice of multisyllabic words, use of grammatically correct sentences, sequencing of events, and taking on the role of another character. We then played a game where one child described the appearance of a gingerbread man (given several gingerbread men who were different colours and had different clothing items) and another child would have to determine which gingerbread man was being described. The speech and language goals in this game include describing, using adjectives and using language to inform. One child would have to give adequate information in order for another child to understand and choose the correct gingerbread man.

Working with children, either in small groups or in the larger Kindergarten setting, is so revealing. Each ordinary day is made extraordinary by being in their company.

Including Kindergarten: One Administrator's Solutions

Jane McGarty

The challenge of ensuring that the Kindergarten voice is heard is one faced by all school level administrators, especially when their school year and even their school day differs from the rest of the school organization. To be fair to both the children and the Kindergarten staff and to make them an integral part of the school can require creative solutions.

To ensure that children in our Kindergarten feel that they make an important contribution to the school, one of the elected Student School Improvement Team representatives is assigned to the Kindergarten class. This student visits regularly, seeking input and suggestions from the Kindergarten children. These ideas are brought back to team meetings. As well, the Kindergarten teacher sits on the School Improvement Team at the staff level to ensure that the Kindergarten viewpoint is considered in site-based decisions.

Kindergarten children have also been paired with students from an older grade level. This connection goes beyond the traditional reading buddy approach. For example, it is encouraging to see the Grade 6 class tutor the Kindergarten class in the computer lab.

At the Kindergarten level, we are developing the school citizens of tomorrow. We are introducing them, and their parents, to the process of school and formal education. We encourage parents, as part of the school community, to continue the level of involvement that they have in Kindergarten. Their voice is also heard, from their representation on the school council to their participation in concerts and many school functions.

Scheduling decisions must include the Kindergarten day: Kindergarten library time and gymnastic time, for example, should not be assigned to whatever time is left, but decided according to sound educational practice for this age group.

Making time for interactions with the Kindergarten class is a conscientious effort on my part. With the students in grades 1 through 6, these interactions are part of the regular routine and do not require the same level of planning. However, with the Kindergarten class, I plan and schedule these interactions to be sure that they occur. The activities range from presenting the golden letter awards to just dropping in and observing the students in action. What matters is not the length of these interactions, but rather the fact that they occur frequently. Students, teachers, parents—and school administrators—all have a role to play in making kindergarten children and staff an important part of the fabric of our school.

Kindergarten: A District-wide Commitment

Joan Alexander

In our school district, we strongly believe in the value of Kindergarten. And we work together to ensure that the community knows the strengths and dimensions of our Kindergarten program.

This vital promotion and advocacy is driven by a district-wide communication committee consisting of representatives from 13 schools. A subcommittee develops an annual communications plan to promote the strengths of our Kindergarten program. This plan identifies the outcomes, audience, message, strategies, timelines, budget and evaluation techniques for our promotional activities.

A poster campaign in February aggressively promotes March registration for the fall term. To save costs we use the same poster each year, adding a new tear-off portion that outlines current presentation dates and activities. Parent volunteers from various schools do this community blitz and all schools readily display the posters that feature our motto "Success Begins With Us."

All schools in the district cooperate by announcing upcoming Kindergarten events in their newsletter or weekly envelopes. Most of our schools also list a "Kindergarten Advocate" in their newsletters or school handbook. This advocate is a parent who can provide more information about the school's Kindergarten program and its unique activities.

In February, our district hosts an annual Kindergarten Fair. We have a guest speaker and a panel of Kindergarten teachers, a counsellor, a parent and a central office administrator, who respond to questions from the audience. Displays reflect the dimensions of the program and showcase projects, art work, scrapbooks and photographs. Information packages are provided to parents, who also have an opportunity to interact with teachers. We host the fair at one of our high schools, where staff members provide whole-hearted support in setting up and orchestrating the event. This venue also gives parents the opportunity to see what their child's educational setting could be like in ten years time!

An open house is held the week prior to registration at each school. The entire school participates in welcoming new students and their parents, through setting up hall and room displays and by creating an "open door" atmosphere. Visiting parents are assessing the whole school, not merely the Kindergarten program and classroom. The open house format varies from an informational evening to a Kindergarten "test drive," in which children visit a regular Kindergarten classroom while parents tour the school. The continuity of educational experiences from Kindergarten through the grades is demonstrated on these school-wide tours as well.

This year our district has added a new feature to our communication with residents and newcomers to the community—a billboard! The billboard highlights various aspects of our programs, under the slogan "Get Ready for Life!" Kindergarten registration is the first focus of the board. The costs for this initiative are shared by all of the schools in the district.

Many common priorities and goals draw our district together, but promoting our Kindergarten program receives a generous slice of the collective energies. Investing in our future is a commitment honoured and supported by our entire educational community.

Kindergarten: From the Outside, Looking In

Ruth D. LeBlanc

As a superintendent of schools, I respect Kindergarten as a school program. There is so much more to Kindergarten than meets the eye, although even a quick stop-in to a Kindergarten class is appealing to any visitor. The bright colours of the many and varied resource materials, equipment and wall displays, along with the interesting arrangement of multiple learning spaces, and the intense involvement of the children in their activities are fascinating.

I have noticed, through numerous visits to classrooms, that Kindergarten children are the least likely to notice that I have stepped into the room. Generally, they are so involved in their play—which is real school work done through hands-on, concrete activities—that they are unlikely to be distracted. The Kindergarten program is relevant to children and builds on their natural motivation for learning.

What more is there than meets the eye? Preparing learning and development opportunities that enable children to develop as confident learners for life is the Kindergarten teacher's challenge. A great deal of knowledge and skill is needed: knowing each child's interests, learning style, and level of knowledge and skill in relation to the learner expectations for Kindergarten; planning and implementing activities that are developmentally appropriate for each child; continually assessing each child's progress in each activity; keeping records; and communicating regularly with the parents of each child.

Kindergarten teachers are masters at using concrete activities to prepare children for more abstract thinking. They analyze and structure play activities for growth. In play, children create ideas, analyze situations, consider alternatives, solve problems, evaluate strategies, make choices, play roles, communicate and carry out many other actions of adult work.

The Kindergarten program, when carried out in accordance with the philosophy and content of the *Kindergarten Program Statement*, is a leading program in schools. It provides the very foundation young children need as they enter more formalized and sophisticated learning opportunities.

Last October, I visited a Grade 1 class in which a student offered to share a story she had written at home. "But first," she said, "I should give you some background so you know how I got the story idea." What sophisticated language and ideas from a student in her second month of Grade 1! Then she read her story, demonstrating writing skills far beyond her age. The story ended with a touching moral: "Everyone can get along, if they try." Hats off to the student, her parents, the Grade 1 teacher, and—at that early point in the school year—the Kindergarten teacher who helped this child become such a confident writer.

Musings on Early Childhood Education and Senior Administrators

Maurice Landry

Senior administrators—superintendents, deputies, associates, directors and principals—should all be knowledgeable about the field of early childhood education. Research suggests that by the time children are 8 years old, they will have learned about 80% of what they will learn throughout their lives. Therefore, administrators should recognize the importance of good education at this level, and ensure that the necessary resources are channelled to teaching younger children. Research also show us that children develop attitudes toward education when they first enter formal education. Of course, educators want these attitudes to be positive.

Senior administrators, in turn, must educate trustees about the importance of early childhood education. They are in a position to do so, and most trustees are open to this type of information. I speak from experience. This "passing on of information" doesn't have to a scholarly report (which would only be skimmed at best). Trustees need to be told during board meetings about the significance of early childhood education.

Senior administrators should know what is going on in classrooms in their jurisdiction. The only way this can happen is by visiting classrooms in person. Early childhood teachers should be thrilled to have these visits, which are an opportunity to demonstrate that children love to learn if they are taught well.

Senior administrators should also keep in touch with the latest research in the field. Early childhood educators are among the brightest and most dedicated people in the world. Unfortunately, they are often timid as well. They must find means to educate their colleagues, senior administrators, parents, and trustees (and not necessarily in that order) about the importance of early childhood education. Lobbying at all levels—individual, community, school, board, and provincial—should explain the philosophy and principles of early childhood education in simple, jargon-free language.

Learning to Teach with Michael

D. Jean Clandinin

When I arrived to teach my first course in early childhood education at the University of Calgary, the course was already in progress. "Curriculum and Instruction in Early Childhood Education" was loosely organized around play-based methods; each week, new strategies and methods for teaching Kindergarten were to be presented. I quickly organized films, discussions, resource

materials, and guest speakers who could best exemplify the methods. I did not really get to know the students well, although I certainly learned their names and some of the things important to their lives. At the time, however, I was concerned that this focus on skills, techniques and strategies would seem oddly disconnected from the experience of the class.
I was fortunate that term to have a young man named Michael in my class. A bit older than the others, Michael was also the only male in the class. I confessed, toward the end of the term, that I was uncertain about how to teach methods courses and that I felt uncomfortable that students had no place for making their own experience part of their inquiries. Michael listened carefully when I asked if anyone would be willing to let me participate in their first year of teaching, to help me understand how new teachers put their personal knowledge into practice. Michael said yes to my becoming a part of his learning-to-teach experience.

During his first year of teaching, Michael wrote a daily journal about the children in his class, how he was making sense of what he did for them and how he made sense of their making sense. He wrote of the activities he structured and of his thoughts on who he was as a person. Michael's reflections on his teaching demonstrated that he was committed to making his classroom a place where children, their questions and their learning were honoured.

The children in his classroom were the most important people in the school. Michael regularly kept administrators and visitors waiting while he paid attention to his first priority. Michael's sense of fun and love of learning came through as he made humour and laughter part of each day. Michael was a poet and a writer of stories. He loved to work with activities that would challenge children's aesthetic knowing. He designed wonderful art projects, created challenging science centres, included places to write and read and places to build. His classroom was an exciting, educative place. I could have said that Michael had learned all of this at university, but it is much more complex than that. The variety of kindergarten learning environments is evidence that teaching is much more than the application of generalized skills and theoretical knowledge.

While Michael taught his first year of school, wrote in his journal and met with me for regular conversations, I was teaching a new university class. As I planned each day, I thought about what Michael wrote and about what he said. While I knew it was important to teach the strategies, techniques and issues crucial to early childhood education, I also knew that Michael's personal experience—embodied in his narrative—shaped much of his practice. Subject matter, children and context make a difference. However, what is most important in teacher education is that students figure out what they already know. Their personal knowledge will have the greatest influence on their teaching practice. Michael's "story to live by" in his teaching was being lived out long before he studied to be a teacher. He had been learning to be a teacher all of his life. This was demonstrated in his first year of teaching. New knowledge learned at the university or elsewhere was not simply "added on" to knowing already in place. Rather, Michael's narrative knowing was being renewed by new experiences. I also realized that Michael's personal knowledge had not been part of my course. What my time with Michael was making clear to me was that his personal knowledge was the knowledge that he worked from as he shaped the methods and strategies that were the best fit with his already-in-place narrative embodied knowledge.

Learning to teach with Michael helped me realize that the knowledge each student brings to their teacher education classes is the most important knowledge. This knowledge is each student's starting point for learning to teach. As I continue to be a teacher educator, my challenge is to have students share their narrative knowledge with each other, with themselves and with me, so that together we can figure out new ways to live and tell our "stories to live by" as teachers. It is within this already storied knowledge that new ways of knowing, including strategies, techniques and methods, find their place.

Considerations for Successful Teaching: A Teacher–Educator's Perspective

Cynthia Prasow

We live in a rapidly changing world. Instant communication, vast experiences, limited resources, greater expectations, unique children with varied backgrounds and experiences, all require a teacher who is an educator, psychologist, nutritionist, physician, scientist, communicator, mediator and organizational manager. Faced with this challenge, how do teachers maintain the integrity of a quality Kindergarten program and still survive?

To cope with change, teachers must be open to change, frequently examining their programs and questioning what they are doing and why. A recent graduate noted that in the first few months of teaching she wrote reflections to help her think about her practice and subsequent program planning. Although she felt "reflected out" after university, the actual process of continual reflection helped her think about her teaching.

To cope with the rather loose boundaries of the Kindergarten curriculum, teachers must set realistic goals. One of my students was concerned that she might burn out in the first six months of teaching because she had so many ideas and activities that she wished to include in her program. I suggested she set goals within her limits: location of the school community, school philosophy, administrative expectations, physical setting of the school, physical setting of the classroom, parent involvement, *Kindergarten Program Statement* and related resources, available funding—and the individual needs of the children.

Finding appropriate resources is a continuous process for all teachers. The diversity of Kindergarten classrooms makes it particularly challenging. Networking within the school and in the community results in new and innovative ideas. One teacher told me she has a well established "account" at a local wallpaper store, where they routinely save old sample books for her. She uses the wallpaper as sturdy covers for children's journals and scrapbooks. Increasingly, the trend is for companies to donate or sponsor supplies for education.

Communication is critical in the teaching profession. Because Kindergarten classes often operate at different times from the rest of the school, it is a challenge to maintain connections with other members of the staff and with the greater teaching community. A Kindergarten teacher recently told me that her class attended a school assembly where they had the opportunity to observe a skipping rope demonstration. The children were so fascinated with this, that in their next gymnastic class, the teacher handed them skipping ropes to try some of the "moves" that the rest of the school had learned.

Other teachers interact within the teaching community through touring the school with the children to meet administration and support staff; organizing a buddy system to connect the Kindergarten with other classes in the school—e.g., partners for reading stories, sharing their work or making joint projects—inviting administration, teaching and support staff to visit the class; developing a pen pal program with another Kindergarten; and by finding a mentor among the school staff or within the Kindergarten network.

To remain current with developments in Kindergarten and early childhood education, it is critical to maintain professional development. Many teachers are members in a professional association such as the Early Childhood Education Council, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, or the Canadian Association for Young Children. Others participate in professional development, in-service courses and attend relevant conferences.

In the new millennium, the importance of early childhood education will increase, as will the pressure on teachers to be accountable. We can address the challenges of a rapidly changing world through reflective practice, setting goals, finding appropriate resources, communicating and maintaining professional development.

Play, Trains and Animals

Roger Delbaere

When I chose to quit my job to stay home and be the primary caregiver to my three-year-old son, Drew, it was the biggest career change in my life—from petroleum engineer to domestic engineer. I took on this job with no early childhood education, training or experience. My role model and biggest supporter was my wife, a Kindergarten teacher. She taught me how to listen, observe and nurture the interests of our son.

Drew was a typical child, egocentric, demanding of my time, attention and love and with a strong desire to explore new things and places. Drew's young world, like other three- and four-year-olds, revolved around play. He evaluated the quality of his interactions with people on the basis of how much they played with him. I struggled the first few months. It wasn't easy trying to find a balance between caring for my son, being a husband and taking time for myself.

A big focus of Drew's interest was, and still is at five years of age, trains and animals. When he was two, we gave him a wooden train set for Christmas. This train set has remained an integral part of our household furniture for the past three years. It has been built and re-built hundreds of times. At first he needed Dad or Mom to put the tracks together. It wasn't long before he was building his own configurations. Holidays and birthdays became opportunities to add to his collection with bridges, signals, tunnels, crossings, engine sheds and animals. Drew would be excited about encountering trains or animals everywhere in his life, while driving, in magazines, storybooks, newspapers, zoos and on TV. His highlight of a trip to the zoo was to ride the miniature railway and listen to the engineer/guide describe the animals along the route.

When Drew was four, I took advantage of a VIA rail seat sale and took a return train trip to Vancouver. I shared in his excitement as we boarded the train, found our seats and explored the train from one end to the other. Memorable moments were riding in the dome car to view the spectacular scenery, eating our meals in the dining car with other train lovers and seeing his face as our porter converted our seats into a berth for us to sleep in. What an educational experience!

We would also go to the zoo in the winter to visit the animals in their winter quarters. The trip was not complete though until we walked to the train tunnel to look beyond the locked gates and say hello to the engines and cars stored inside for the winter. Spring was an opportunity to walk along the tracks themselves, pretending we were trains pulling zoo customers, prior to the real trains being released from their winter home.

Drew took these memories and real life experiences home with him and incorporated them into his play with his trains and animals. My role, I soon observed, was as a participant, initiator and provider of time, space and materials. It was fascinating to watch him build his own zoo train in our living room with the same loops, tunnel and bridges. We would push our wooden engines and passenger cars along the tracks giving our imaginary customers the guided tour of the plastic animal models placed beside the tracks. He would listen intently to my guided tour and incorporate the same information on wallabies, marsupials, maras, emus and mouflon sheep into his own tour.

When the zoo trains reopened this past May, we road the train together and saw the animals back in their outdoor homes and listened to the new information from the engineer/guide. Again these changes were taken back home to our own zoo train where the harbour seal pool was now changed to the home of the Australian Black Swans and ringed tailed lemurs from Madagascar were in the spot where the gibbons once were.

One day I suggested we bring Drew's tape recorder along and record our ride on the zoo train. This proved to be enormously popular with him and over the course of a few weeks, six different engineer/guides were recorded on our tape. Again these were taken home and played back as we pushed our engines along the tracks of our zoo. The information gained about the different animals was astounding and the pleasure Drew derived from repeating the 'tour' trip over and over again was huge. On a subsequent trip, zoo staff were very cooperative in giving the 'deluxe' tour for us where they would provide as much information on the animals we passed by, as time allowed. Drew would return home and incorporate the additional pieces of information into his own tour. One weekday trip to the zoo, Catherine, the regular engineer asked Drew if he would like to give the tour on the next trip. At first he was hesitant, but with a little encouragement on my part, he put the microphone over his head and as Catherine started the engine and drove the train he gave his 'deluxe' tour. The pride and self-confidence he exhibited as he described the animals we passed by to the paying customers behind us was very evident.

Drew started Kindergarten this September and to the classroom he brought his love and thirst for knowledge about animals and trains with him. His train play at home has continued to evolve and grow as he has started his formal education at school. His first self-initiated project in the classroom was at the woodworking centre, where over a period of four days he sawed, measured, nailed, glued and painted an elephant for his zoo at home. Then Drew noticed that his home collection of plastic animal models did not include many of the animals in the real zoo collection. I suggested that he could try to make or draw the desired zoo animals. For the next three days at the Kindergarten painting centre Drew painted mouflon sheep, emus and ring-tailed lemurs that were brought home and placed at the appropriate spot along the tracks at his home zoo. In addition Drew created signs with our help which read 'Zoo closed', 'Train entrance'.

At the end of his day when I put my son to bed, he recounts his day in his prayer, which always ends with the words, "I hope I see some trains tomorrow. Amen." As Drew has entered school I have continued to observe his love of play, trains and animals. Drew has extended his play and real life experiences from zoo, to home, to school, which has been expressed through art, reading, writing, creating and drama. What a solid foundation the world of play gives our children to layer their future formal academics upon.

Being a stay-at-home dad has been the toughest job I have ever taken on, but also the most rewarding. It has allowed me to be an integral part of my son's early years, to share in his education and development, to nurture his interests in the world around him and to be a child again myself. It has given me a relationship with my son that I never had with my own father. It is a priceless gift to both of us that will be passed on to future generations.

Home/School Communication

Teresa Landry

I use a variety of methods to communicate with parents throughout the year. These include home visits, monthly newsletters and, of course, report cards. A couple of years ago, after receiving the new *Kindergarten Program Statement* and finding large increases in class size, I decided to drop my former report card format. The old format would be too labour-intensive, as it was heavily dependent on anecdotal reporting. Besides, it did not adequately reflect the new program statement. Unfortunately, I made this decision about a month before report cards were due, so I had to come up with something fast!

I knew I couldn't do justice to the program statement by whipping up something in a hurry, yet I also knew I had a responsibility to report accurately to parents on their children's progress. How could I choose the most important aspects, the most significant, the most interesting? Then it came to me. Why not ask the parents themselves? The more I thought about it, the more sense it made to me. By asking parents directly for questions about their own individual children, I would satisfy their curiosity, report accurately on their children, and (to be completely honest) buy myself some time!

I sent home a letter inviting parents to write up to three questions, on aspects of their child's development that most concerned them. I asked that the questions be returned in a week, and then waited for the response.

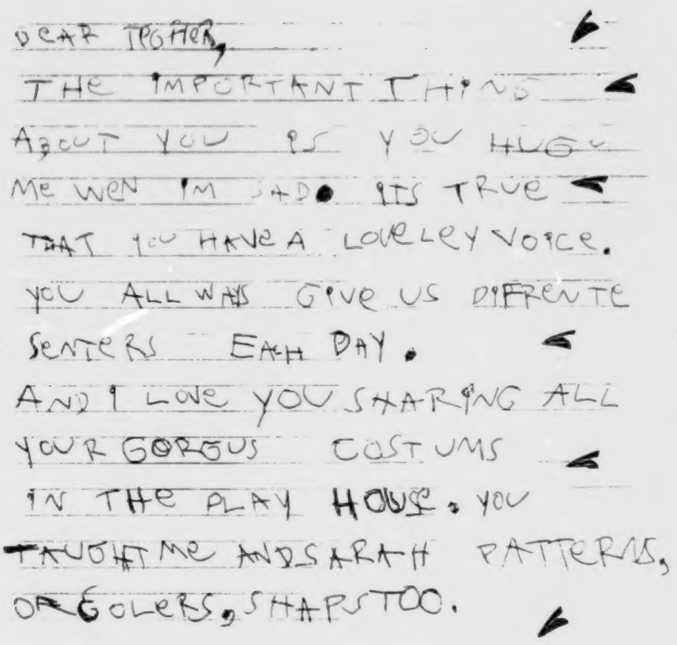
When I had collected all their responses, I began working on them, and was pleasantly surprised to find how enjoyable this task proved to be. It was like having a conversation with parents, but with time to reflect on my answers. The questions they asked were very revealing. They gave me great insight into what families expected of the program and of their child. I was able to answer specific concerns, reassure, explain, support, advise and share. Best of all, each set of questions was different, so I had no feeling of assembly line reporting!

Feedback from parents was very positive, especially since the question format was immediately followed by child-centred conferences in which parents could observe their children completing tasks in the classroom. The combination satisfied their curiosity as to how their children were progressing and set the reporting process off to a great start. I've used this method of communication each fall ever since.

Post-Script: I had wonderful support from my principal and associate principal during this transition! Our school division allows schools and teachers to create their own reporting procedures.

Dear Teacher

Andraea Patching



DEAR TEACHER,
THE IMPORTANT THING
ABOUT YOU IS YOU HUG
ME WEN I'M SAD. ITS TRUE
THAT YOU HAVE A LOVELEY VOICE.
YOU ALLWAYS GIVE US DIFRENTE
SENTERS EACH DAY.
AND I LOVE YOU SHARING ALL
YOUR GORGOUS COSTUMS
IN THE PLAY HOUSE. YOU
TAUGHT ME AND SARAH PATTERNS,
OR COLERS, SHAPS TOO.

②

I HAD FUN LeRNiNG
MYNUMBeRS AND TOO SHARe

iN CLASS. BUT THe
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SAD.

ANDRACA

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PS. FiND MY PUZZLe
i MADe FOR YOU

A Letter to the Grade 1 Teacher

Ji-Sook Yeom

Dear Grade 1 Teacher,

It's already the end of our Kindergarten year. Although I don't like to let them go, I have to learn to say goodbye. When I think of the children moving on to Grade 1, I have several concerns. I'd like to share my thoughts and feelings about this with you so that, together, we can help the children feel comfortable.

The children are very excited about being in Grade 1. One day, when I asked them what would be the best thing in Grade 1, some of them decided to draw pictures. Some imagined themselves reading books while others drew themselves playing mathematics games or doing homework. Many expected to be good readers and writers, yet were worried about being in Grade 1 as they felt they did not yet know how to print or how to spell. They were somewhat hesitant about the Grade 1 experience. I have wondered how to help them with their transitions.

Thank you for spending time with me recently and answering my questions. I believe that it is through working together we will make the children's move to Grade 1 a smooth one. I believe that it is very important for teachers to communicate and share wonders and ideas. As you know, many children are excited and eager about the move to Grade 1. Others have more difficulty in making this transition. Being in Grade 1 can be a big challenge for young children. It involves many changes—meeting a new teacher, making new friends, adjusting to a new environment, new curricular expectations and adapting to new routines. I am glad that the children have had opportunities to meet and to get to know you over the year. Every time we visited your classroom, we had a wonderful time with you and your students. Children seem to learn so much from each other.

We know that the transition from Kindergarten to Grade 1 affects families as well. Last month, when you and I hosted a parent information meeting, I had a feeling we were helping families with this experience. I hope the parents continue to be actively involved in your classroom next year. We both know that when parents help their children at home and at school, children can make smoother transitions.

When I think of our year coming to a close, I still have more wonders and concerns. Will children's initial days in Grade 1 be too long for them? Will they feel tired? Will they have a snack time to nourish the mind, heart and body? Will they have time for guided play? Will they feel excited or bored with classroom activities? Will they continue to explore and discover in concrete, hands-on ways? I also worry about the children who will move from other schools. For them, the transition from Kindergarten to Grade 1 must be harder than for those children who have already been part of our school community.

Every child is unique. He or she has different needs and interests. Unless we create the space for children to tell their stories and listen to them, we will not know what they need. Knowing your caring and compassion, I know my Kindergarten children will feel happy in their Grade 1 classroom. I entrust you to care for them, to listen to them, to nurture them. When they feel secure, they will be successful. You and I can do this together. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Kindergarten Teacher

Reflections from Kindergarten Parents

Even as a full-time parent, I still could not give my child what ECS offered this year—learning to cooperate and work with others; to feel an important part of the class and the whole school; to play group games; to promote cooperation as well as to improve motor skills. *Calgary parent*

Before Amanda started Kindergarten she could not count, did not know her alphabet, could not hold a pencil properly and was not emotionally ready for school. I feel that Amanda would have had a lot of problems without Kindergarten. *Edmonton parent*

My son has discovered that learning is fun and he has developed the ability to solve problems and take on projects independently. His vocabulary has expanded and his self-confidence has increased. *Red Deer parent*

My son enjoys Kindergarten tremendously. He missed one day due to the flu and was heart broken to have to stay home. He has cultivated many friendships and enjoys his teachers very much. *Peace River parent*

My son was very hesitant and shy—this has improved greatly through the year. He also learned to write his name and recognize letters of the alphabet. He also learned to function in a group and to have respect for the other children. *Ft. Assiniboine parent*

It was discovered that my daughter has a learning disability. We are working together on it now. I feel that if she had not gone to Kindergarten and the disability was not discovered until grade one, in all probability she would have been held back. *Leduc parent*

The social skills my daughter has learned in Kindergarten have been invaluable as she is an only child. I believe Kindergarten prepares children to handle emotional situations in group settings in a better way. *Grimshaw parent*

My child has learned to listen to instructions in Kindergarten. She has also learned to share, to extend her vocabulary and to take turns. She has new confidence and now accepts responsibility. She has learned songs that she constantly sings at home. She is happy going to school and being with others and has learned to respect others. *Legal parent*

My son has shown positive changes in all areas. He is more interested in letters and writing. *Eckville parent*

My son has developed a real desire to learn new things. He has become more independent by doing more for himself. He has also taken a greater interest in books. *Lacombe parent*

He is much more interested in learning first and foremost. He can now not only count and say his alphabet, but legibly write all the numbers and letters he knows. He sounds out words and in some cases gets the whole word correct. He now understands addition concepts. I could just go on and on. *Ardrossan parent*

At the start of ECS, my daughter was extremely "young" for her age with respect to listening skills, social skills, group interaction skills, etc. The beginning of the school year was tough for her, but she eventually became comfortable with the routines, knowledgeable about school rules, and competent in group skills. It took until May, but she literally blossomed. *Sherwood Park parent*

My daughter had to learn to be away from Mom for a day and learn to take instructions from other adults. *Barrhead parent*

My child has gained social and emotional benefits. She is more mature, cooperative and independent. Her self-esteem has increased as she feels proud of every step she accomplished in Kindergarten. For example, she learned her address and phone number. Now, she can phone her friends. *Grande Prairie parent*

My child has developed high self-esteem by knowing he can function well with his peers and function well under the guidance of a teacher. He has learned numerous concepts such as the passage of time, addition and subtraction (less, more, same) and is learning the alphabet. *Elk Point parent*

I'm a stay-at-home mom, by choice, who spends lots of time with my kids and enrolls them in many programs. Academically, Kindergarten probably isn't all that essential for my child, but Kindergarten isn't just about academics. That is just a small component. The social, emotional, creative and physical benefits can be invaluable. In addition, Kindergarten helps prepare all the students because some of the gaps in abilities are incredible. Before my son entered Kindergarten I was unaware of how absolutely important Kindergarten was. I feel many of the people who say Kindergarten isn't important would change their minds if they did any long term observing in the classroom. *Lethbridge parent*

APPENDIX C: SELF-REFLECTION

OVERVIEW

Questions encouraging self-reflection relate to Chapters 2 through 5. Through involvement in the process of self-analysis, teachers can reflect on their practice and thoughtfully identify areas for gradual growth. The self-reflection process can be used and reused by teachers as a way of reflecting on their Kindergarten programming and teaching.

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Chapter Five: Partners in Learning 254

Notes:
- What am I doing now?
- What would I like to be doing?
- What do I need to assist me in my growth?

ROOM ARRANGEMENT

1. How do I organize the physical space to encourage exploration?
    - How have I arranged equipment, materials and supplies so they're accessible to all children?
    - What areas have I provided for individual, small-group and large-group activities?
    - Do I make changes in the learning environment to meet changing needs and interests?

2. How do I organize the physical space to encourage independence?
    - Do I label supplies with symbols, pictures and/or words to encourage children to select and put away materials and to clean up?
    - What personal space do I provide for each child?
    - What places do I provide for children to display their own work?
    - In what ways have I organized the room from the children's perspective?
    - Do I encourage and support children to make changes in the environment to meet their self-identified learning needs?

3. How do I organize the physical space to encourage harmonious interaction and cooperative learning?
    - How have I arranged the room to foster children's interaction with people and materials?
    - Have I allotted adequate space and materials for each centre?
    - How do I ensure that children are safe in the Kindergarten classroom?

CLASSROOM CLIMATE

1. How do I create and sustain a classroom climate that fosters enjoyment of learning and creates community?
    - What behaviours do I model and emphasize?
    - How do I deal with potential problems between children?
    - How do I demonstrate acceptance of children's needs to assert themselves, to be verbally expressive and to be inquiring?
    - How do I structure classroom activities to enhance cooperation?
    - What do I do to emphasize helpfulness, kindness and caring attitudes?
    - How do I and other adults in the room demonstrate self-control and coping skills?
    - How do I recognize and acknowledge children's feelings?
    - What is my belief about the use of humour in the classroom?
    - How do I expose children to different points of view?

LEARNING RESOURCES: EQUIPMENT, MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES

1. How do my learning resources address a wide range of developmental capabilities?
2. How do I encourage children to use materials in a variety of ways?
3. When and why do I introduce new materials?
4. How do my learning resources encourage social interaction and peer modelling?
5. Do I have a variety of materials available for use; e.g., commercial, teacher-prepared, "found" objects and materials supplied and created by the children?
6. How do I make materials and supplies accessible to the children?

LEARNING CENTRES

1. What are my reasons for including the centres I have in my classroom?

2. What learnings will children accomplish in the learning centres I've set up?

3. How are my Learning Centres organized?
   - How do I assess individual children's learnings?
   - How do I offer a range of activities within each centre to address all children's needs?
   - How do I encourage interaction between centres?
   - What changes do I make to the learning centres and why?
   - What practical considerations have influenced my choice of centre locations; e.g., water, sand and art activities in tiled areas; reading and block centres in carpeted areas?
   - How do I make decisions regarding practical management of centres; e.g., number of children, length of time at centres?

PLAY IN THE KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM

1. What is my philosophy regarding play in the kindergarten classroom?
2. How do I act as a facilitator of play?
   - What types of questions do I ask and what suggestions might I offer to help children develop thinking skills, expand units of study/themes and activities, and solve problems that arise?
   - How do I participate in children's interactive learning play to gain greater insights into possible opportunities for teaching?
   - Do I observe play and act on my observations to further facilitate play; e.g., offer props, materials?
   - How do I provide time, materials, space, an enabling environment and support?

CHAPTER THREE: PLANNING FOR INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

Notes:
- What am I doing now?
- What would I like to be doing?
- What do I need to assist me in my growth?

SCHEDULING AND USE OF TIME

1. How is our daily schedule organized?
   - Do I prepare the room before the children arrive so I am free to greet the children as they enter the classroom?
   - What classroom routines have I established?
   - How do I make time daily to discuss children's individual plans and completed activities?
   - What is my system for encouraging children's activity choices to support their planning and transitions?
   - How do I maximize time for interactive learning play and minimize the number of transitions?
   - How are my daily plans recorded?
   - What signals have I established to gain the children's attention?
   - How have I organized clean-up?
   - How do I dismiss children at the end of the day?
   - What time am I making to interact with other staff members?
2. How is our daily schedule organized to reflect children's developmental needs?
3. Have I developed a well-balanced daily schedule that includes:
   - active as well as quiet activities
   - individual, small-group and large-group activities
   - indoor and outdoor activities
   - independent projects as well as teacher-supervised activities
   - child-initiated as well as teacher-initiated activities?

PROGRAM PLANNING

1. How do I use my observations to build developmentally appropriate expectations for each child?
    - How do I challenge and support each child?
    - How do I communicate with the children to promote their feelings of success?
    - How do I work to identify and respond to children's special needs, different learning styles and particular interests?

2. How do I build long-range and short-range plans for the group?

3. How responsive and flexible is my planning?
    - How do I modify my plans on the basis of children's interests, individual needs and responses?
    - How do I use the *Kindergarten Program Statement*, the *Kindergarten Guide to Implementation* and other appropriate resource materials?

STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

1. What are some of the instructional strategies and activities I'm currently using in my classroom?

2. What am I doing to enhance the effectiveness of these strategies and activities?
    - How do I monitor their effectiveness with individual children and adapt when necessary?
    - How do my strategies and activities encourage children to interact, explore and make choices?
    - What do I want to learn more about? How do I go about doing this?

RECORDING AND ASSESSING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR AND GROWTH

1. How do I observe children's behaviour and growth to identify individual needs and to ensure that children are involved in a variety of areas of the program?

2. How do I record my observations?

3. What methods do I use to study and record each child's development and current level of understanding and how effective are they?

    - jotting down observations
    - checklists
    - children's use of self-recording forms
    - dated samples of the work of each child
    - a small note pad or clipboard for recording observations and anecdotes
    - a camera to record non-permanent products such as block construction and organization of dramatic play
    - audio and video recording equipment to augment observations
    - other

4. How do I use observations and other assessment records to identify and respond to children's changing needs?

    - How do I interpret observations within the context of looking at the whole child?
    - Are my assessment procedures based on the goals and objectives of the *Kindergarten Program Statement*?
    - Do I look for patterns of behaviour exhibited at different times and in different situations?
    - To meet the diverse needs of each child, do I focus on both children's areas of strength and weaknesses?
    - Do I observe children's behaviour in spontaneous, self-initiated activities as well as in teacher-initiated activities and routines?
    - How do I use the results to benefit children?

5. How do my assessment methods reflect individual, cultural and linguistic diversity?
    - Am I aware of each child's cultural orientation to learning?
    - Am I aware of possible misinterpretations of nonverbal behaviour; e.g., averting eye contact?
    - In what ways do I help children and their families understand the legitimacy of the curriculum goals?
    - Are my assessment materials free of cultural, language, and gender biases?
6. What opportunities do I provide children to reflect on and evaluate their own learning?

EVALUATING AND REPORTING CHILDREN'S GROWTH

1. How do my evaluating and reporting procedures link to the *Kindergarten Program Statement*?
2. Am I using all three types of evaluation in my classroom—diagnostic, formative, summative?
3. How do I strive to maintain open and clear lines of communication with families on a frequent and regular basis?
    - Do I summarize children's individual development and needs in clear, positive, jargon-free and meaningful language?
    - What variety of means for communication do I use—conferences, home visits, meetings, monthly newsletters, telephone calls, classroom visits by parents?
4. How does my reporting procedure support parents' confidence in their children and their ability as parents?
5. How do I ensure that communication flows both ways between home and school?
6. Am I using current educational theory to guide my assessment, evaluating and reporting procedures?

THEMES, PROJECTS AND IN-DEPTH STUDIES

1. How does my organization for learning meet my needs and the children's needs in our:
   - themes
   - projects
   - in-depth studies?

2. How have I unified learning across centre activities, while still allowing children freedom to branch off to individual areas of interest?

FACILITATING TRANSITIONS/THE FIRST DAYS

1. How are children prepared for the transition into and from the Kindergarten program?
   - What opportunities have I created for children and families to visit the Kindergarten program prior to their formal entry?
   - How do I foster informal interaction between the Kindergarten class and preceding and following groups?
   - Is age accepted as the only entry criterion?

2. How do I seek to ensure that all children feel welcomed and accepted in our Kindergarten classroom?

SPECIAL EVENTS

1. What do I do before and after special events to relate these to activities and discussions in the classroom?

2. How do I integrate the special event into classroom activities?

CHAPTER FOUR: CHILDREN'S DIFFERING NEEDS

Notes:
- What am I doing now?
- What would I like to be doing?
- What do I need to assist me in my growth?

1. What does my language say about my philosophy?
   - Is the terminology I use to describe children tied to the protocol of the community?
   - Is my terminology child-sensitive and does it focus on the child rather than on the gender, disability or other differing need?
   - Am I able to describe what I am doing and why I am doing it in language the parents of my class can understand?
2. How do I build an understanding of the differing needs of my students with the children and their families?
   - What types of in-class support systems do I use?
   - Do I recognize each child's strengths as well as challenges?
   - Do I provide ample opportunities for parents/guardians to participate in their child's learning
3. How do classroom displays reflect the principle that we all belong and can contribute?
   - Do I include samples of each child's work in displays?
   - Do displays incorporate process as well as product?
   - Do I display a variety of processes/products to highlight children's individual talents; e.g., 3-D projects?
4. What is the quality and quantity of my interactions with all children in my classroom?
   - Do I provide enough support for individual children, as well as encouraging independence?
   - How do I structure and modify classroom activities to ensure all children are included?
   - How do I model appropriate interactions and encourage the development of a classroom community?

5. What guidelines do I use for evaluating classroom books and materials so that they promote respect and recognize diversity?

   - Have I reviewed and updated my resources recently?
   - How do I seek input from school personnel, parents and community members when I select resources?

6. How do I plan for activities with levels that meet a variety of needs?

   - Are instructional activities open ended? In what way?
   - Do instructional activities meet children's differing learning needs and match their learning styles?
   - Are there opportunities for children to make choices in selecting activities?

CHAPTER FIVE: PARTNERS IN LEARNING

Notes:
- What am I doing now?
- What would I like to be doing?
- What do I need to assist me in my growth?

TEACHERS

1. How do I demonstrate my understanding of:
   - child development from birth to 7 years
   - the learning processes in early childhood
   - teaching techniques especially appropriate for the young child
   - observing and assessing young children's behaviour and growth?

2. How knowledgeable am I about current research and learning?
   - What do I know about brain development and learning theories, such as learning styles and multiple intelligences?
   - What professional reading have I done recently?
   - What professional reading would I like to do next?

3. How do I connect information on learning with my classroom practice?
   - How do I ensure that the strategies and activities in my classroom meet the learning needs of all children?
   - How do I provide a supportive learning environment for all children?

4. What is my training in early childhood education and child development?
   - Have I studied or am I currently studying child development, early childhood education or a closely related field—child psychology, family relations—at the university level?
   - How do I reflect on my practice and connect my theoretical knowledge with my practical knowledge?
   - What early childhood professional development programs have I attended? What did I learn?

- Am I an active member of an organization related to the early childhood field?
- Do I take opportunities to observe other developmentally appropriate early childhood programs?

5. Who do I want to be in the lives of my Kindergarten children?

CHILDREN

1. How do I use children's own interests and needs as the core upon which the Kindergarten program is built in:
    - the planning process
    - themes and/or projects?
2. Do I encourage children to make choices and participate in independent learning through:
    - hands-on discovery, manipulation, exploration and investigation of many diverse materials
    - movement around the room
    - learning from peers
    - other?
3. How do I treat children as individuals, with unique strengths and needs?
    - How do I show acceptance and value for differing ability levels?
    - How do I encourage development at the child's own pace?
    - What access to multilevel experiences do I provide for children?
    - How do I encourage children to respect, value and celebrate differences?

4. How do I help children learn to be responsible participants in groups?
   - What involvement do I give children in developing and implementing positive classroom expectations?
   - What opportunities do I provide for small-group cooperative work?

5. How do I encourage children to take responsibility for themselves and the environment?
   - How do I encourage self-reliance in children?
   - What responsibility do I give children for care and storage of equipment, materials and supplies?
   - What responsibility do I give children in classroom clean up?

TEACHER ASSISTANTS

1. Do I prepare teacher assistants for implementing their responsibilities by:
   - advising them of plans and responsibilities in advance
   - allowing time for regular communication
   - providing professional development opportunities?

2. Do I effectively involve the teacher assistant in supporting children's learning through:
   - reading with a child or group of children
   - listening to and recording children's dictated stories
   - encouraging and assisting children to write their own stories
   - asking leading questions, making suggestions
   - playing games
   - assisting with field visits
   - record keeping; e.g., attendance, medical information
   - sharing personal expert knowledge; e.g., carpentry, sewing

- helping children to choose, record and evaluate their activities
- material preparation
- program planning; e.g., offering suggestions, contributing materials
- ongoing assessment; e.g., checklists, anecdotes
- dealing with emergencies; e.g., fire drills, nose bleeds, bathroom accidents?

PARENTS

1. Do I encourage parents to become involved in the Kindergarten program through:
   - parent information evenings
   - Local Advisory Committee
   - volunteering inside/outside the classroom?
2. How are parents encouraged to support their child's learning beyond the classroom/school?
3. How are parents invited to share their knowledge of their child with school personnel?
4. How are parents enabled and encouraged to maintain communication with the school?

SUPPORT SERVICE SPECIALISTS

1. Do I encourage specialists to directly support and enhance my program by inviting:
   - classroom involvement
   - coordination of our activities to avoid content isolation
   - workshop presentations
   - attendance/presentations at parent meetings
   - providing me with feedback?

2. Do I encourage specialists to indirectly support and enhance the program by being open to:
   - advice and/or ideas
   - suggested materials, activities and equipment
   - new research and professional resources?

ADMINISTRATORS

1. What is the understanding of administrators regarding principles and components of high-quality Kindergarten programs?
   - What training and/or understanding do they have in regards to child development and early childhood education?
   - How do they demonstrate support for teachers?
   - How do they encourage and sustain communication and dialogue?

2. Do I help administrators understand what is happening in the Kindergarten classroom by:
   - suggesting articles, books
   - extending an invitation to the classroom
   - inviting/accompanying them to lectures, conferences, workshops?

3. How do I work with administrators to provide effective, consistent and ongoing communication with parents, the community and all staff members?

4. How do I actively seek administrative support for using specialists, parents, community members and older students to assist in our Kindergarten classroom?

5. How are developmentally appropriate principles and strategies related to Kindergarten entry and class placement/grouping utilized?
   - Are different levels of ability and development expected and valued?

- Are any tests used at Kindergarten entrance and other intervals valid, reliable and helpful in initial program planning and information sharing with parents?
- Is retention seldom recommended as a viable option for young children?
- Are all children welcomed—as they are—into heterogeneous classroom settings?

6. How do teachers and administrators work together to support developmentally appropriate classrooms by striving to provide funds for needed staff, equipment, materials and supplies?

7. How do I take advantage of the expertise of school authority personnel?

MEETING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY NEEDS AND INTERESTS

1. How do I demonstrate sensitivity to each child's individual family pattern, cultural heritage or special needs?

    - Am I knowledgeable about and sensitive to each child's family pattern and special stresses; e.g., illness or death of family member, new sibling, recent divorce or separation, poverty, family violence, substance abuse?
    - Do I accommodate the needs of the children's families by:
        - communicating with families frequently, and in a variety of ways
        - helping to ensure that child care options are available for conferences and meetings
        - arranging meetings around parent schedules?
    - How am I a resource for information and referral for families; e.g., child care services, economic and health supports?
    - How do I show respect for cultural diversity and seek to establish and maintain a nonsexist, culturally inclusive classroom environment; e.g., classroom pictures of members of many cultural groups, of both genders in varied occupations and professions?

- Am I knowledgeable about and sensitive to each child's special abilities and needs?

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

1. How do I involve parents in a meaningful partnership that supports the children's learning?
   - How do I enable parents to share their expertise and perceptions of their children?
   - How do I work to establish a trusting relationship with families?
   - What opportunities do I provide for parents to be involved with their child's education at home?
   - Do I encourage families to participate in our Kindergarten program in a variety of roles according to their interests, skills and availability; e.g., preparing materials for the classroom, assisting on field trips, sending in snacks, sharing expert knowledge—nurse, carpenter?
2. How do I inform the community about the Kindergarten classroom?
3. How do I involve community members in the Kindergarten program?

MAINTAINING ONGOING COMMUNICATION

1. How do I maintain open and clear lines of communication with families on a frequent and regular basis?
2. What do I do to help parents/guardians feel comfortable about contacting me?

APPENDIX D: TEACHER IDEAS

During the preparation of this implementation guide, teachers across the province were invited to share exciting and thoughtful ideas that have worked in their classroom. Their contributions provide practical and useful information for teachers to use in their classrooms.

Teacher ideas relate to Chapters 2 through 5. They may be modified to meet teacher needs and photocopied for classroom use.

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Chapter Two: The Learning Environment 262

Chapter Three: Planning for
Instruction and Assessment 268

Chapter Four: Children's Differing Needs 314

Chapter Five: Partners in Learning 325

POSSIBLE CLASSROOM TREASURES

acetate report covers
adding machine rolls
aluminum foil
aluminum plates
aquarium gravel
baby blankets
baby clothes (tiny, for dolls)
baby food jars
balloons
beads
beans (dried)
binders
bingo cards
bingo daubers
bottle caps
bottles
boxes (small appliance)
brushes
burlap
buttons
candles
cans
carpet bits
catalogues
cellophane
ceramic tiles
children's furniture
clip boards
clothespins
coat hangers
coffee filters
combs
computer paper
cookie cutters
cookie sheets
corks
cotton balls, swabs, pad
costume jewelry
costumes (children's)
craft supplies
crayons (paper removed)
crepe paper, streamers
cupcake papers
daytimers
dentist tools
disposable diapers-newborn
dollhouse furniture
egg cartons
elastics
envelopes
erasers
fabric
fake fur
felt
file folders
film containers
flashlights
floor tiles
foam packing pieces
forms—business, invoice …
frames
fruit baskets
fur
game pieces
garlic presses
greeting cards
grocery trays (foam/cardboard)
gummed labels, stickers
hair curlers
hats
jars (large, clear with lids)
keys
lace
leather
lentils
lids
linen—sheets, towels
mac-tac
magazines
magnets
manipulative sets add pieces
maps
marbles
masks
measuring spoons, cups
medals, souvenir coins
medical items
mesh bags
mirrors
muffin tins
multicultural items
nails
nature finds
newspapers
notepads
nuts and bolts
old calendars
old clocks
old paper—office, stationery
old small appliances
old clothing for dress-up
old cutlery
old slides
old socks
old telephones
old utensils
panty hose
paper bags
paper cups
paper doilies
paper plates
paper rolls
pencils
pet supplies
pill containers
pine cones
pipe cleaners
planting supplies
plants
plastic containers
plastic bits
popsicle sticks
polished rocks
posters—travel, grocery …
pot scrubbers
puppets
puzzles
reels
rice
rickrack
ribbon
rocks (interesting, colours)
rope
rubber stamps
safety pins
samples
sandpaper
sawdust
scrub brushes
seeds
sequins
shaving cream (unscented)
shavings
shelf paper
shells
skewers
sponges
spools
spray bottles
stamps
storage tubs
straws
string
string
table cloths
thread
tongue depressors
tools
toothpicks
tracing paper
tubing
uniforms
wallpaper books and pieces
wax
wigs
wire
wood scraps
wool
wrapping paper
yarn

LEARNING CENTRE PLANNING SHEET

Language: books, puzzles, word games and cards, lotto games, stamps, journals, tracing cards

Mathematics: number puzzles, games, unifix cubes, peg boards, geoboards, patterning and tracing cards and activities, size/numeral seriation activities, objects to classify, weights and scales, counting and number/numeral matching games

Fine Motor: puzzles, beads, lacing cards, sewing cards, paints, tracers, variety of printing materials, playdough with cookie cutters and rolling pins, etc., scissors, hole punchers, lego and other manipulatives

Printing: paper, pencils, crayons, pencil crayons, picture dictionaries, letter and numeral tracers

Computer: letter and numeral matching games, initial consonants, letter and numeral dot to dots, counting, addition and subtraction games, patterning and creating games

Science: plants, worm composter-books and displays, magnifying glasses, weight scale, models, posters

Sand: shovels, pails, rakes, funnels, sandwheel, variety of containers of different sizes and shapes, sifters, measuring cups and spoons

Water: pails, scoops, funnels, tubes, measuring cups and spoons, containers of various shapes and sizes, sponges

House: dress-up clothes, props for role playing, pictures and displays

(continued)

Blocks: variety of large and small blocks, tools, vehicles, pictures and displays

Woodworking: variety of wood scraps, tools, nails, screws, work apron and safety glasses

Music: variety of rhythm instruments, books, posters

Listening Centre: tape recorder, books and tapes

LEARNING CENTRES

Plans for the Week of ______________________________

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Sensory Experiences					
Dramatic Play					
Art					
Large Manipulatives					
Small Manipulatives					
Science & Math					
Music, Movement & Rhythm					
Special Experiences					
Snacks & Cooking					
Outdoor Play					
Language Arts					

WEEKLY NOTES

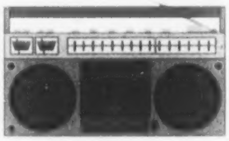
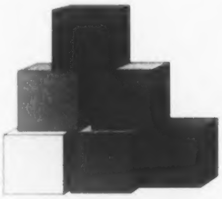
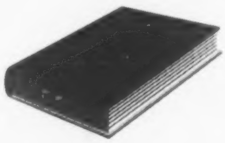
Week of ______________________________ to ______________________________

Art	**Blocks**	**Buddy Classes**	**Computers**	**Construction**
Cooking	**Craft**	**Display Table**	**Drama**	**Field Trips**
Games	**Health**	**House**	**Journal**	**Library**
Listening	**Manipulatives**	**Mathematics**	**Oral Language**	**Outdoors**
Physical Education	**Puppets**	**Puzzles**	**Sand**	**Science**
Social Studies	**Stories**	**Water**	**Woodworking**	**Writing**

★ Weekly notes may include reminders, materials needed, children to focus on, etc.

CENTRE PLANNING SHEET

Week of ______________________ Name: ______________________________

2 3 - 1 4 = + Math ○○○○○	Water ○○○○○	Sand ○○○○○
 Carpentry ○○○○○	 Music ○○○○○	 House ○○○○○
 Listening Centre ○○○○○	 Blocks ○○○○○	Lego ○○○○○
 Writing Centre ○○○○○	 Painting ○○○○○	 Reading ○○○○○

Children colour in circle after visiting a centre.

SAMPLE LONG-RANGE PLANS FOR KINDERGARTEN

SEPTEMBER: **Getting to Know Each Other**

- getting comfortable in classroom
- building friendships
- getting to know people in our school
  - principal
  - secretaries
  - librarian
  - custodian
- getting to see other students at work

Fall

- leaves

OCTOBER

- trees
- seeds
- harvest
- thanksgiving

NOVEMBER

- animals
- clothing

Hospital

- tour
- hospital centre
- pharmacy
- ambulance
- emergency
- first aid

Fire

- truck construction
- water pumping
- water pressure

DECEMBER

- nozzles
- tools
- making candles

Christmas

- wrapping paper
- gifts
- cards
- Christmas story
- multicultural celebrations

Reindeer

- caribou
- elk
- deer
- goats

(continued)

JANUARY	**Winter**
	• snow
	• temperature
	• recreation
	• animal research
	• survival
	• bird feeders
	• animals from other parts of the world
	– Africa—"Lion King"
	• wild cats
	• snakes
FEBRUARY	• groundhogs, underground
	• hibernation
	Friendship, caring
	• Valentines
	• post office
	Family
MARCH	**Fantasy**
	• fairies
	• elves
	• trolls
	• giants
	• leprechauns
APRIL	**Spring**
	• weather changes
	• wind, kites
	• birds
	• rabbits
	• Easter
	New Life
	• planting
MAY	• embryology (hatching eggs)
	• pond study
	• flower gardens
JUNE	**Changes**
	• weather, sky
	• growing
	Farewells

Note: Topics may change depending on children's needs and interests.

LONG-RANGE PLANS

	Theme/Project	Literature Study	Student Teachers/ Long-term Volunteers
September	The Gingerbread Man Animals	Gingerbread Man Author Study – Eric Carle	– Final Phase University Student Teacher (6 weeks full time)
	Project—The Grocery Store	Author Study – Gerald McDermott	– Final Phase University Student Teacher (6 weeks full time)
	Hospital		– Grant MacEwan Student Volunteer (100 hrs.)
		The Guniwolf/Little Red Riding Hood	
	Safety		– University Study Buddy (10 wks–1 a.m. per week)
	Structures	The Three Little Pigs (many versions)	
	Life cycles (butterflies)	Non-fiction books on life cycles	– University Early Childhood Student (4 weeks–1 p.m. per week)
	Weeds and Seeds	Pattern books	– University Volunteers (2) each 1 day per week
June			

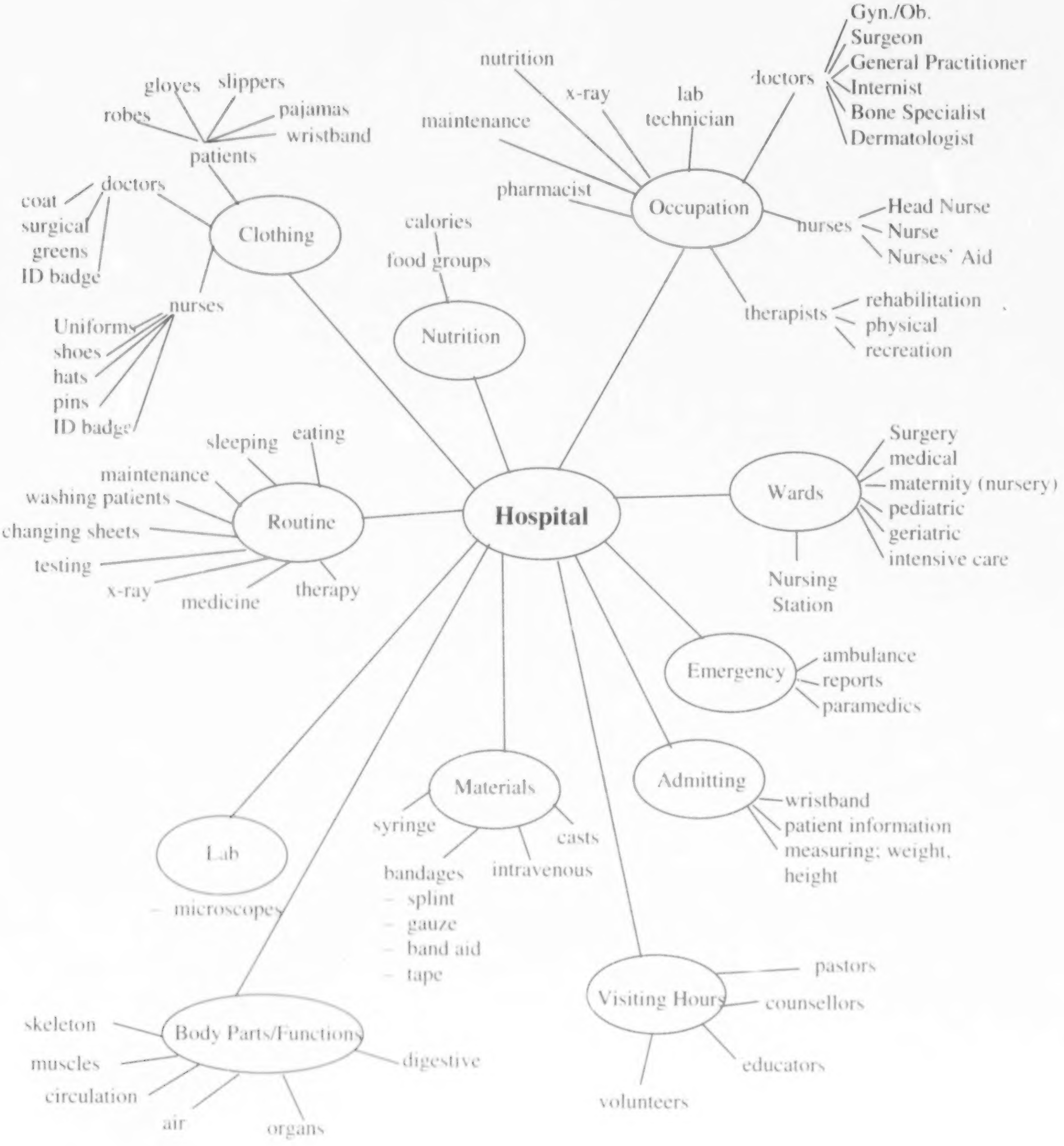
Note: The length of the theme or project is dependent upon the interests and needs of the children.

THEME/UNIT SCHEDULE: KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

September	**Friendship** – establish relationships with peers and adults – get to know school: routines (bathrooms, fire drill, personnel) **Autumn** – observe weather and outdoor changes	
October	**Thanksgiving** – being thankful; practice manners – vocabulary development **Halloween** – fantasy and reality – safety	
November	**Remembrance Day** – handling anger and frustration appropriately **Outer Space** – vocabulary development – observe environment	
December	**Christmas** – the First Christmas – vocabulary development **Winter is Here!** – observe seasonal changes	
January	**Happy New Year!** – vocabulary development **Under the Sea** – share knowledge of ocean environment – vocabulary development	Skating Program Community Ice Arena
February	**Groundhog Day** – observe an unfamiliar animal **Valentine's Day** – sharing and caring – building relationships	
March	**Nutrition** – learn about how food helps us grow **Spring** – observe seasonal changes	
April	**Easter** – vocabulary development Dinosaurs – ancient history – sorting and classifying	
May	**Mother's Day** **Green Growing Things** – vocabulary development – sorting and classifying – observation skills	Swimming Program Community Pool
June	**Wonderful Water** – properties of liquid **Father's Day** **Get Ready for First Grade** – recess – visit teachers and classrooms	

Note: Creativity and physical development are integral components of every theme!

PLANNING WEB


Hospital
Occupation
doctors
Gyn./Ob.
Surgeon
General Practitioner
Internist
Bone Specialist
Dermatologist
nutrition
x-ray
lab technician
maintenance
pharmacist
nurses
Head Nurse
Nurse
Nurses' Aid
therapists
rehabilitation
physical
recreation
Clothing
patients
gloves
slippers
robes
pajamas
wristband
doctors
coat
surgical greens
ID badge
nurses
Uniforms
shoes
hats
pins
ID badge
Nutrition
calories
food groups
Routine
sleeping
eating
maintenance
washing patients
changing sheets
testing
x-ray
medicine
therapy
Wards
Surgery
medical
maternity (nursery)
pediatric
geriatric
intensive care
Nursing Station
Emergency
ambulance
reports
paramedics
Admitting
wristband
patient information
measuring; weight, height
Materials
syringe
casts
bandages
- splint
- gauze
- band aid
- tape
intravenous
Lab
- microscopes
Visiting Hours
pastors
counsellors
educators
volunteers
Body Parts/Functions
skeleton
muscles
circulation
air
organs
digestive

PLANNING WEB

Patterns

Art

random – finger patterns/objects
thick paint
regular printing
– fold paper into rectangle and put shape in each
sponges, found materials

Environmental

life cycles
meal rotation
seasons
rubbings
looking for patterns (bricks, tiles)
patterns in nature (tree rings, bark, seeds)

Literature

motifs
borders
patterns (spilt milk, B.B.)

Collections

fabric/paper
regular/irregular
alphabet
letter stamps–writing
names of friends
letter combinations

Music

rhythm patterns: stamp/clap/pat
with sounds
quietly/softly
high low

Language

"Patchwork Quilt"
– J. Pinkey/V.Floorney
poetry
verse/chorus
"Very Hungry Caterpillar"
– Eric Carle

Mathematics

beads
pattern blocks
number patterns; odd, even
unifix
calendars
weeks
paper chains

Movement

time—step, step, hop
space—straight, zizzag

Multicultural

willow pattern plate
paisley pattern
hand/body pattern

Display

patterns in nature
man made patterns
child made patterns

Sand

sand combs
writing in sand
imprints
wood shapes in sand
footprints/hand prints

PLANNING FOR BIRDS IN OUR YARD

Phase 1—Planning and Getting Started

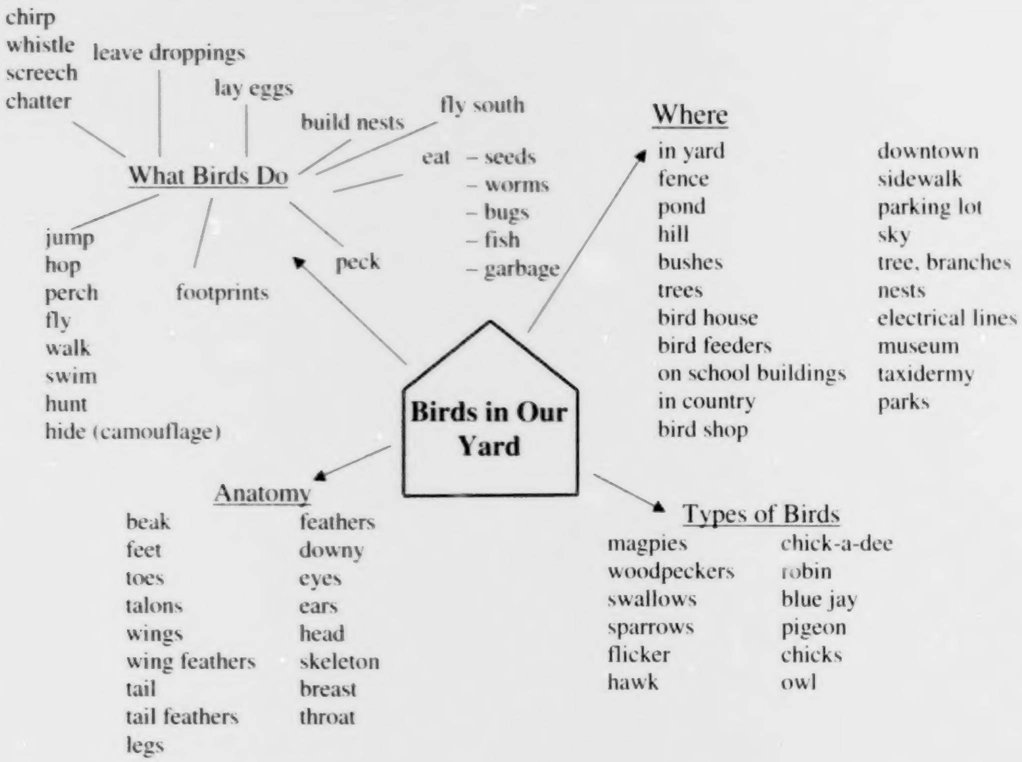
- collect story books about birds common to our area
- provide bird seed as an introduction to the birds in our yard
- draw, paint, model and record stories to create a foundation of knowledge
- create a list of questions and misconceptions.

Phase 2—Developing the Work

- develop an awareness of birds in our yard through observation, interaction and care taking
- discuss the role of bird-watchers in enabling us to explore our environment
- explore the feeding habits of birds
- investigate birds—colour, size and characteristics
- examine nests—how they are constructed, materials used
- collect data through graphs and Venn diagrams
- represent through drawing, painting, clay modelling, constructing and sharing stories
- visit an expert.

Phase 3—Concluding and Celebrating

- create a developing display of our growing knowledge
- display three dimensional representations
- display graphs and Venn diagrams of our bird project
- share our discoveries with families and peers
- create a book about birds in our yard.


Birds in Our Yard
What Birds Do
chirp
whistle
screech
chatter
leave droppings
lay eggs
build nests
fly south
eat – seeds
– worms
– bugs
– fish
– garbage
peck
footprints
jump
hop
perch
fly
walk
swim
hunt
hide (camouflage)
Where
in yard
fence
pond
hill
bushes
trees
bird house
bird feeders
on school buildings
in country
bird shop
downtown
sidewalk
parking lot
sky
tree, branches
nests
electrical lines
museum
taxidermy
parks
Anatomy
beak
feet
toes
talons
wings
wing feathers
tail
tail feathers
legs
feathers
downy
eyes
ears
head
skeleton
breast
throat
Types of Birds
magpies
woodpeckers
swallows
sparrows
flicker
hawk
chick-a-dee
robin
blue jay
pigeon
chicks
owl

THE ROCK PROJECT

Phase I

- Encourage story telling through memory drawings of rocks and stones, and by relating my own personal story. Use an unusual rock from my garden to pique the children's interest and to start them thinking about their own personal experiences with rocks.
- Read stories about rocks that are based on fiction.
- Send a letter home to children's families to encourage their involvement in their child's learning.

Concerns:

- where to locate appropriate resources
- how to involve families
- how to encourage children to share their personal experiences and knowledge of rocks/stones
- how to determine what their misconceptions are and what their questions might be while observing of the children at work.

Phase II

- Explore our immediate back yard and surrounding area to collect and find out how rocks are used.
- Locate and research a rock garden with the campus back yard. Use our research to build our own miniature rock garden at Ringhouse.
- Visit the Earth and Atmospheric Sciences rock museum. Observe how rocks are organized and displayed. Build display boxes in the woodworking area. Create a rock museum in our block room to display the rocks the children collected and brought in.
- Invite in an expert.
- Look at how rocks are used as a 'canvas' by artists to paint on. Paint rocks and add them to the display.

Concerns:

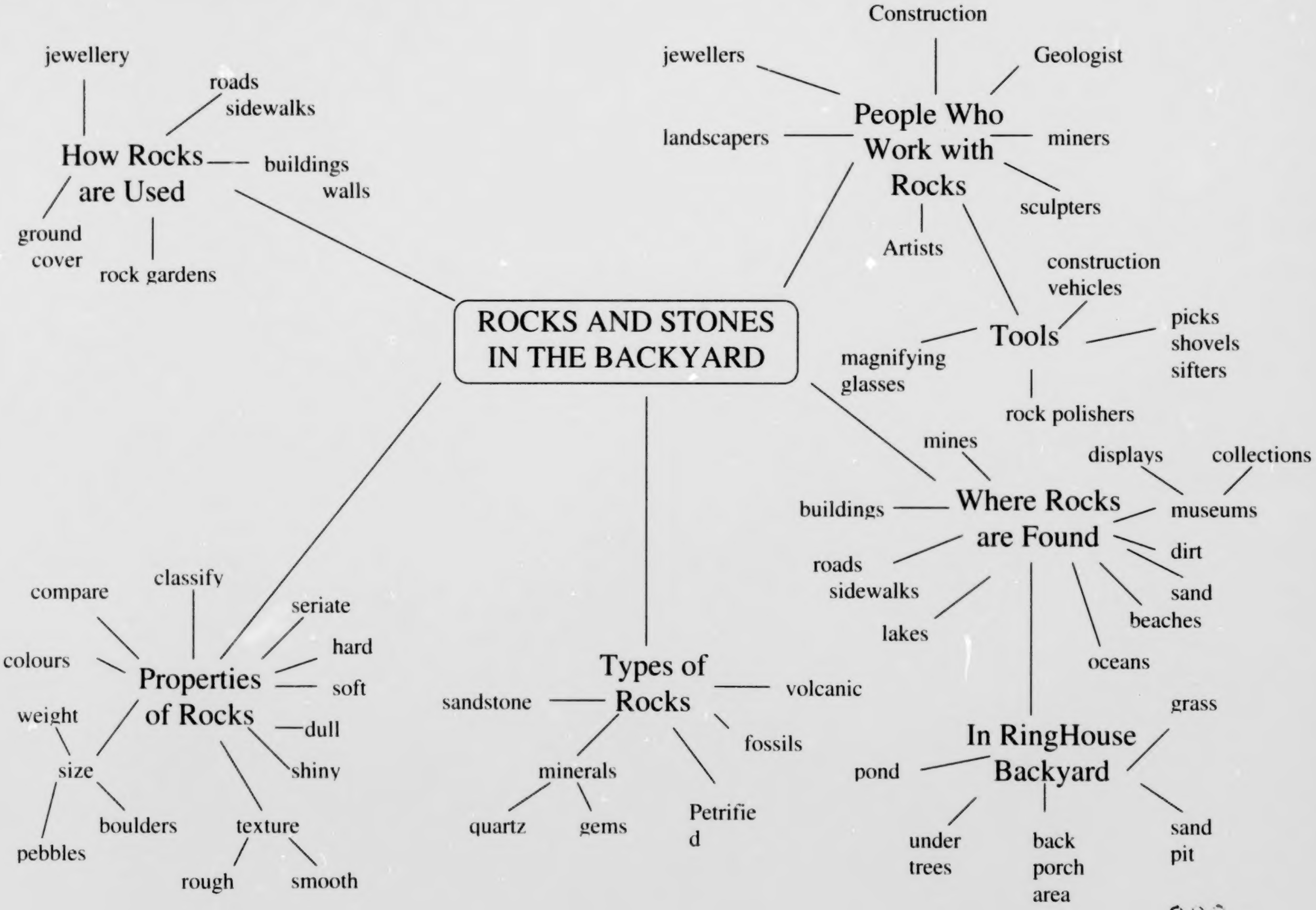
- how to meet the individual needs and developmental needs of a group of children
- weather the focus should be the acquisition of knowledge about rocks for this age group or the development of skills and dispositions
- what experiences within the structural features of the project, discussion, field work, representation, investigation and display would be most suitable
- where to locate experts for us to visit or to visit us.

Phase III

- Put together an informative 'magazine' with the children to share what they've learned with their families.

Concerns:

- how to best celebrate the children's work
- how to involve the children
- how to measure the children's growth and acquisition of knowledge
- how to share that information with families.


ROCKS AND STONES IN THE BACKYARD
How Rocks are Used
jewellery
roads
sidewalks
buildings
walls
ground cover
rock gardens
People Who Work with Rocks
Construction
jewellers
Geologist
landscapers
miners
sculpters
Artists
Tools
construction vehicles
picks
shovels
sifters
magnifying glasses
rock polishers
Where Rocks are Found
mines
displays
collections
museums
buildings
dirt
roads
sidewalks
sand
beaches
lakes
oceans
In RingHouse Backyard
grass
pond
sand pit
under trees
back porch area
Types of Rocks
sandstone
volcanic
fossils
minerals
quartz
gems
Petrifie
d
Properties of Rocks
compare
classify
seriate
colours
hard
soft
dull
shiny
weight
size
pebbles
boulders
texture
rough
smooth

PLAN FOR THE MONTH OF ____________________ **WEEK** ________________

Objectives: ____

____

____

	Attendance Question	Theme Development	Teacher Directed Activity	Volunteer Supervised Activity	Story
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					

Note: Column titles may be changed to meet individual teacher/class needs.

WEEKLY LESSON PLAN

Date: ______________________ **Theme** ________________________________

Supervision _________________

- -

Time | MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY

8:45

OPENING ACTIVITY:

9:05 Attendance – Calendar – Theme Time – Chants – Story – Alphabet – Early Child Development

9:20 CENTRES

10:15 RECESS

10:30 SNACK – SHOW AND TELL

10:50 LARGE GROUP ACTIVITY – STORY – PHYS. ED.

11:15 SINGING

11:25 DISMISSAL

ASSEMBLY

BUDDY READING

LIBRARY

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

KINDERGARTEN DAILY PLAN **DATE** ____________________

Snack Child ____________________ Parent Volunteer ______________

THEME ______________

8:25 – 8:30	Greet children
8:30 – 8:55	Opening Exercises
8:55 – 9:15	Concept Development (may be related to centre activities)
9:15 – 10:15	Centre time Student Teacher activity with small group: Teacher Activity with small group: Parent Activity with small group: Centre Choices for remaining students—large group:
10:15 – 10:25	Snack Time
10:25 – 11:00	Small-group Activities (fine motor, craft, journal) or Library or Buddies or Music
11:00 – 11:15	Hometime preparations

KINDERGARTEN HALF-DAY PLAN

DATE: ______________________ A.M. or P.M.

9:00–9:05 (1:15–1:20)

Meet students at the door. Supervise entry. Children are to organize in the coat room then proceed to the carpet area where attendance is to be quickly taken and absences sent to the office.

9:05–9:20 (1:20–1:30)

PHYSICAL EDUCATION:

9:20–9:35 (1:30–1:45)

OPENING ACTIVITIES (on the carpet after children return to the room)

1. Special Messages and Collection of notes, money …
2. Selection of the Special Helper: ________________
3. Introduce and/or practise fingerplays
4. Do the calendar activities
5. Introduction of new centres/activities, reminders for "must-complete" activities
6. Choose books for home reading.

9:35–10:10 (1:45–2:15)

MINI-LESSON AND CENTRES

Focus for Lesson:

10:10–10:30 (2:15–2:35)

STORY AND DISCUSSION

10:30–11:00 (2:35–3:15)

MINI-LESSON AND CENTRES

Focus for Lesson:

11:00–11:20 (3:15–3:35)

CLOSING ACTIVITIES:

Clean-Up, Centre Sharing, Fingerplay/Poem/Music.

Distribution of home correspondence and personal work.

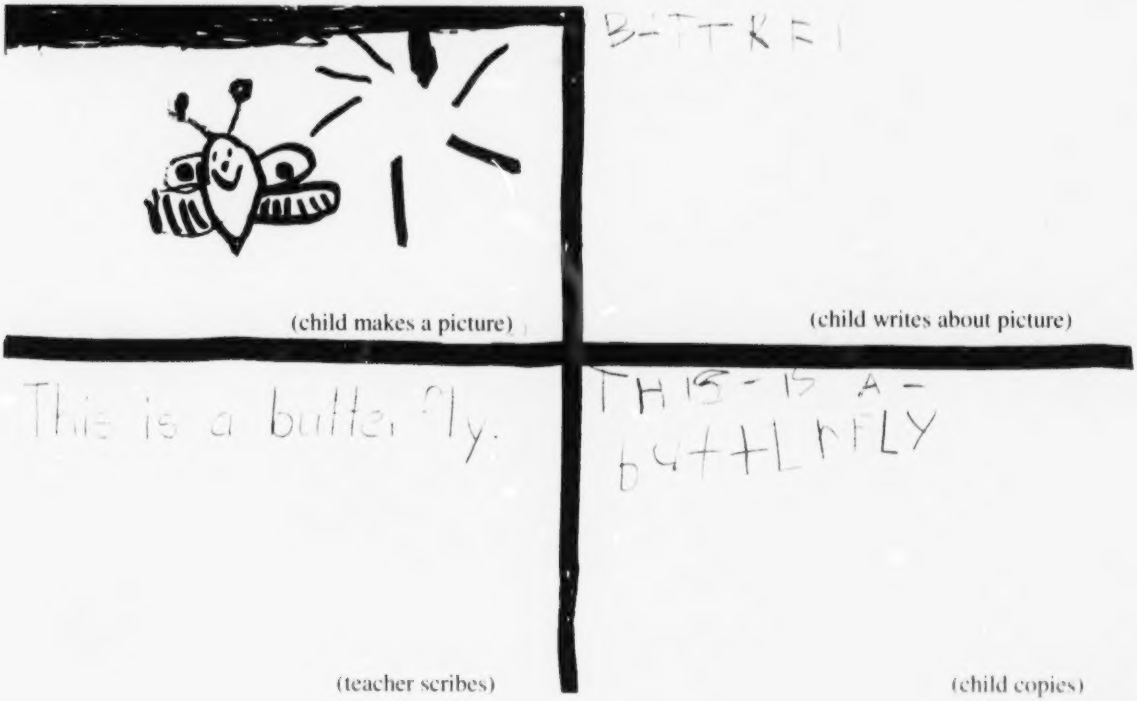
KINDERGARTEN DAY PLAN DAY: ____________________

ARRIVAL	A.M.: 8:40–8:50 Jackets off/shoes off. Indoor shoes on. Name tags hung up. Choose a book and look at it in group area.	P.M.: 12:30–12:40
OPENING EXERCISES:	8:55/12:45 Signal to put books away. Songs: "The More We Get Together", "Hello Everybody"	
ATTENDANCE/CALENDAR		
GROUP SESSION		
ACTIVITY TIME		
CLEAN-UP		
GROUP SESSION	SONGS	STORY
PREPARATION FOR HOME		

THE 4-SQUARE JOURNAL

I have found that this journal is best used with Kindergarten children who have had print experiences with a blank, unlined journal first and are now ready to explore more conventional writing.

The child draws a picture in the first square. In the square beside the picture the child attempts to write about the picture. The child then brings the journal to the teacher or volunteer and tells about the picture or "reads" what has been written. The teacher then rewrites the child's story in the box underneath the picture using correct print formation and spelling. The teacher returns the journal to the child and the child copies the teacher's model in the fourth square. For many children the 4-Square entry takes more than one writing session to complete. It is also an excellent type of writing to use with emergent writers of all ages or with children who are afraid to take risks in their writing.


B-TTKFI
(child makes a picture)
(child writes about picture)
This is a butterfly.
THIS-IS A-
b4++LrFLY
(teacher scribes)
(child copies)

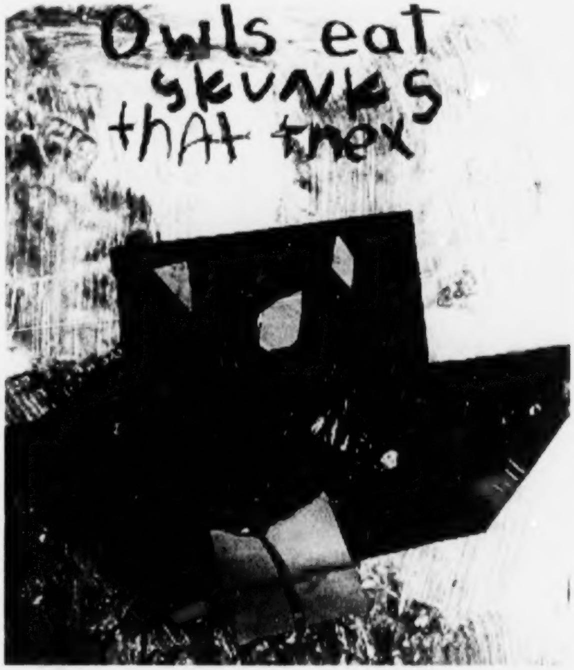
USING THE TEXT OF THE *KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT* TO SUPPORT YOUR PRACTICE AND TO EDUCATE PARENTS

The *Kindergarten Program Statement* is useful when added to bulletin boards. I retype parts of the learner expectations when I am preparing—or sometimes, as I am finishing—a bulletin board—it depends on how efficient I am or how much time I have. Whether it is beginning or end, I try to get 1 or 2 sheets of paper up beside the children's work. These sheets with the LEARNER EXPECTATIONS printed can explain what otherwise might look to be just 28 painted owls with something "scribbly" at their beaks or mouths, or photographs of "kids just playing with blocks and straws."

I place the used sheets inside the cover of the *Kindergarten Program Statement* so that I can find and use them again.

Parents and passers by in hallways can read the learner expectations and gain an understanding of the learning that is happening. Hopefully they will engage the children in dialogue about their work as well.

This activity allows us to highlight children's work to demonstrate the relationship between the expectations of the *Kindergarten Program Statement* and the children's activities and our instructional practices.



LEARNER EXPECTATION

THE CHILDREN BEGIN TO ACQUIRE INFORMATION FROM SELECTED SOURCES.

KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM STATEMENT
COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

A SAMPLE
KINDERGARTEN CHECKLIST

Name: ______________________________ Birthdate: ____________________

1 – Usually 2 – Developing 3 – Needs More Experience

Area	Sept	Nov	Feb	June
Personal and Social Responsibility				
is self confident				
works independently				
follows rules and routines				
follows directions				
respects the rights and property of others				
expresses feelings in appropriate ways				
takes turns and shares materials				
is interested in learning				
attempts to resolve conflicts independently				
Language Arts				
participates in reading activities				
participates in class discussions				
forms some upper and lower case letters				
identifies some upper case letters				
is beginning to recognize letter sounds				
recalls events in stories				
can identify rhyming words				
Mathematics				
names 6 basic colours				
names 4 basic shapes				
sorts objects				
uses terms more and less				
uses terms light and heavy				
counts objects				
matches numeral and numbers to 10				
can reproduce and extend patterns				
Physical Skills and Well Being				
Gross Motor				
walks forward – heel/toe				
walks backward – heel/toe				
catches ball				
bounces and catches ball				
hops on one foot				
runs lightly on toes				
jumps with knees bent, feet apart				

(continued)

1 – Usually 2 – Developing 3 – Needs More Experience

Area	Sept	Nov	Feb	June
Fine Motor Skills				
traces simple shapes				
cuts on lines				
prints first name				
cuts simple shapes				
prints some letters and numerals				
has mature pencil grasp				
handedness is established				
manipulates small objects				
Creative and Cultural Expression				
participates in music and drama activities				
uses a variety of media				

A SAMPLE SHOW AND TELL OBSERVATION FORM

Presentation

____ pronounces words clearly
____ focuses attention
____ expresses ideas and feelings clearly
____ displays a positive attitude
____ displays confidence

____ is well prepared
____ voice level
____ flow of presentation
____ knowledge of topic

N: Not yet apparent	B: Beginning to develop
D: Developed	H: Highly developed

Name

Month

Topic

Recorded Observations

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS—A TEACHER OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Reading	NAME ______________ DATE ______________		
The child:	has mastered	still learning	needs to learn
talks about ideas, experiences and familiar events			
talks about favourite oral, print and other media texts			
talks about own reading and writing experiences			
listens to experiences and feelings shared by others			
expresses interest in new ideas and experiences			
connects oral language with print and pictures			
expects print and pictures to have meaning and to be related to each other in print			
understands that print and books are organized in predictable ways			
asks questions and makes comments during listening and reading activities			
reads own first name, environmental print and symbols, words that have personal significance and some words in texts			
begins to make connections among sounds, letters, words, pictures and meaning			
identifies and generates rhyming words			
copies scribed words and print texts to assist with writing			
talks about experiences similar or related to those in texts			
experiments with sounds, words, word patterns, rhymes and rhythms			
identifies the main characters in texts			
appreciates the sounds and rhythms of language in shared language experiences			
listens to and recites short poems, songs and rhymes; and engages in word play and action songs			
draws, records or tells about ideas and experiences			
makes statements about topics under discussion			

(continued)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS—A TEACHER OBSERVATION CHECKLIST
(continued)

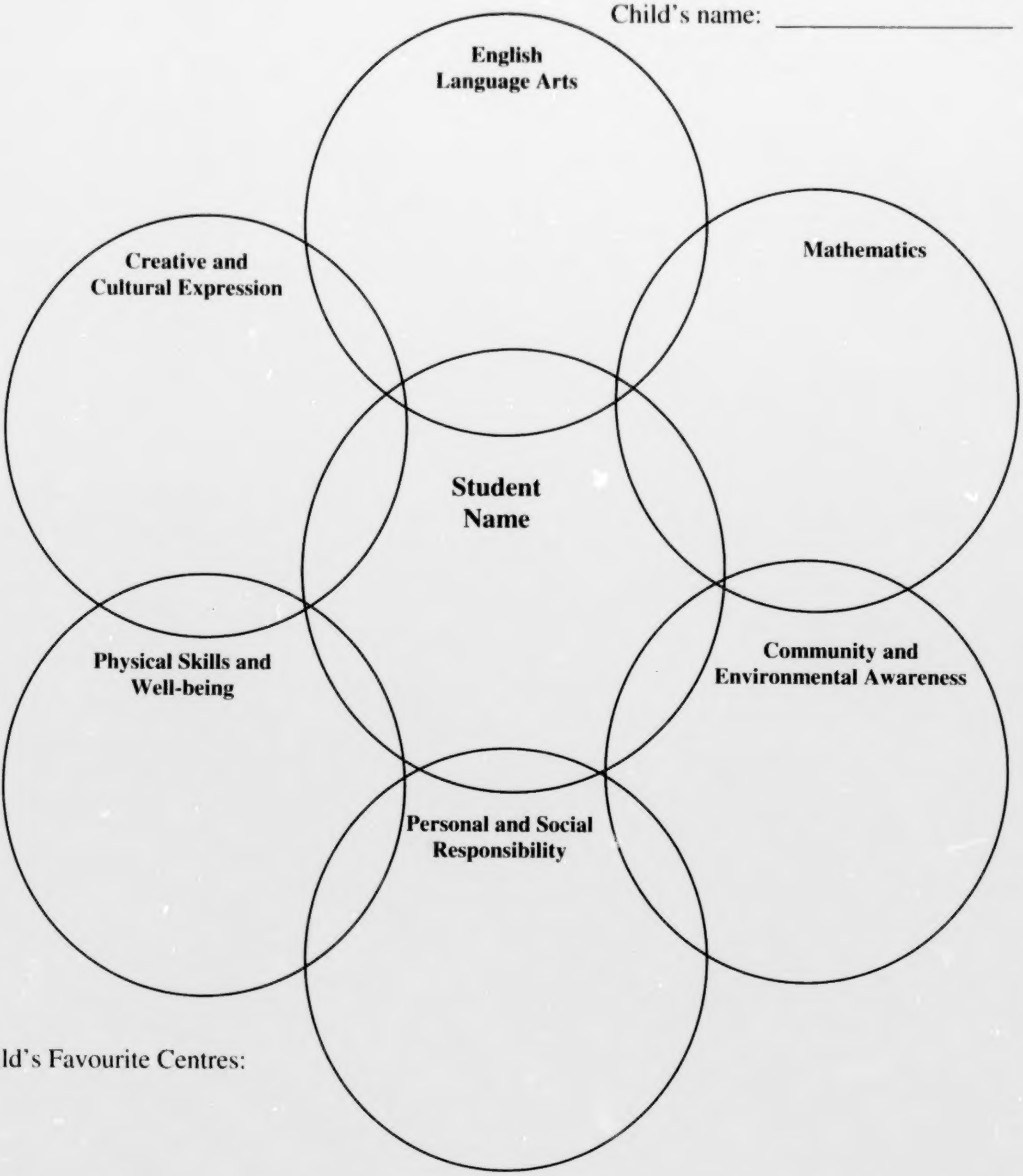
	NAME ____________ DATE ____________		
The child:	has mastered	still learning	needs to learn
suggests ways to gather ideas and information			
asks questions to makes sense of information			
represents and talks about ideas and information; dictates to a scribe			
shares new learnings with others			
forms recognizable letters by holding a pen or pencil in an appropriate and comfortable manner			
explores and experiments with new words			
experiments with sounds, colours, print and pictures to express ideas and feelings			
connects letters with sounds in words			
prints own name, and copies environmental print and words with personal significance			
speaks in a clear voice to share ideas and information			
follows one- or two-step instructions			
explores personal experiences and family traditions			
uses appropriate words, phrases and statements with adults and peers when speaking and listening, sharing and taking turns			
participates in class and group activities			

MATHEMATICS—A TEACHER OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

	NAME ____________________ DATE ____________________		
The child:	has mastered	still learning	needs to learn
counts the number of objects (0 to 10)			
builds and compares sets of objects			
explores single-digit numerals, using a calculator or a computer			
represents the processes of addition and subtraction			
sorts objects, using a single attribute			
recognizes and reproduces, extends and creates a pattern, and describes orally			
arranges objects in order of size, by length or by height			
covers a surface with a variety of objects			
uses the words full, empty, less and more, to talk about volume and capacity			
uses the words heavier or lighter, to talk about mass			
uses the terms long time or short time			
uses words like hot, hotter; cold, colder; warm, warmer; cool, cooler to talk about temperature			
exchanges play money for objects in a play store			
identifies, sorts and classifies 3-D objects			
builds 3-D objects			
collects, with assistance, first-hand information			
constructs, with assistance, a concrete/object graph, using one-to-one correspondence			

ANECDOTAL NOTES

Child's name: ________________


English Language Arts
Creative and Cultural Expression
Mathematics
Student Name
Physical Skills and Well-being
Community and Environmental Awareness
Personal and Social Responsibility

Child's Favourite Centres:

Take time to observe the student in all 6 learning areas.
Record specific examples to support your statements.

PORTFOLIO REFLECTION

This was hard

This is my favourite

I like this best

My family will love this

My teacher will think this is great

I do not really like this

I worked very hard on this

Ask me more about this

This shows how smart I am

WOW! This is wonderful

Teacher note: These sentence frames make it easy to have young children reflect on their work. I enlarge the sentences, colour code, cut them into sentence strips and have the children glue them onto their portfolio samples. Parent volunteers can help children view their sample collections, read the sentences and monitor the selections.

SAMPLE SELF-REFLECTION FORMS

Name ______________________ Date ______________________

In the ______________ Centre today, I liked ______________________

____

Next time, I want to ______________________________________

Name ______________________ Date ______________________

Activities in our class:

Group Meeting Area	☺	😐	☹
Journals/Notebooking	☺	😐	☹
Gym	☺	😐	☹
Story time	☺	😐	☹
Art Centre	☺	😐	☹
Science Centre	☺	😐	☹
Math Centre	☺	😐	☹
Other __________	☺	😐	☹

RUBRIC SCALE FOR CENTRES

Student Name: ______________________________

4	– completes tasks to the best of his/her ability – shows a clear understanding of directions – consistently motivated and focused; sees tasks through to the end – interacts positively with others
3	– often completes tasks to the best of his/her ability – frequently follows directions – seldom requires reminders to remain on task – usually interacts positively with others
2	– requires assistance to complete tasks – needs support to follow directions – developing ability to remain on task – developing skill at interacting positively with others
1	– rarely completes tasks – unable to follow directions independently – needs frequent reminders to remain on task – interrupts or distracts others

Date	Art	Block	Computer	Cooking	Dramatic Play	Gross Motor	Group Meeting Area	Library	Math	Music	Sand	Science	Water	Woodworking	Writing		
November																	
March																	
June																	

Additional Comments:

November:

March:

June:

KINDERGARTEN: TEACHER OBSERVATIONS

Teacher: ______________
Date: ______________

Child's Name: ________________________

Y = Yes S = Sometimes N = Needs More Time to Develop B = Beginning to Develop

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

SOCIAL SKILLS

1. Enjoys school .... ____
2. Enjoys learning new things .... ____
3. Has confidence in own abilities .... ____
4. Can wait for own turn to speak without interrupting others .... ____
5. Respects routines and follows rules in the classroom .... ____
6. Uses a classroom voice .... ____
7. Is kind to others .... ____
8. Gets along well with others .... ____
9. Helps others .... ____
10. Shares with other children—materials, space, centres, teacher's time .... ____
11. Is willing to share and to take turns .... ____
12. Plays cooperatively with other children .... ____
13. Can solve disputes with other children without hurting them .... ____
14. Asks for help if needed .... ____

WORK HABITS

1. Listens while being read to .... ____
2. Listens attentively .... ____
3. Follows directions .... ____
4. Participates in group discussions .... ____
5. Participates in large/small group games, singing .... ____
6. Takes care and puts best effort in completing a task .... ____
7. Completes tasks independently .... ____
8. Chooses a variety of centres/activities .... ____
9. Cleans up at clean up time .... ____
10. Keeps the classroom tidy .... ____

(continued)

SELF HELP SKILLS

1. Knows telephone number/address .... ____
2. Takes care of self and belongings .... ____
3. Dress/undresses self .... ____
4. Can zipper/buttons on coat .... ____

PHYSICAL SKILLS AND WELL BEING

FINE MOTOR SKILLS

1. Prints first name .... ____
2. Holds and cuts with scissors .... ____
3. Finds it easy to cut with scissors .... ____
4. Holds a pencil properly .... ____

Teacher Observations:

KINDERGARTEN: HOW I FEEL ABOUT MY LEARNING

Completed by Child & Parent

My Teacher is: ____________________
Date: ____________________________

Name: ________________________________ Age: ______

Y = Yes S= Sometimes N = Not Yet

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

SOCIAL SKILLS

1. I enjoy school .... _____
2. I enjoy learning new things .... _____
3. I have confidence in my abilities........ _____
4. I can wait for my turn to speak without interrupting others........ _____
5. I respect routines and follow rules in the classroom .... _____
6. I use a classroom voice........ _____
7. I am kind to others........ _____
8. I get along well with others .... _____
9. I help others........ _____
10. I share with other children—materials, space, centres, teacher's time ...... _____
11. I am willing to share and to take turns .... _____
12. I play cooperatively with other children .... _____
13. I can solve disputes with other children without hurting them .... _____
14. I ask for help if I need it .... _____

WORK HABITS

1. I listen while being read to .... _____
2. I listen attentively........ _____
3. I follow directions .... _____
4. I participate in group discussions........ _____
5. I participate in large/small group games, singing .... _____
6. I take care and put my best effort in completing a task........ _____
7. I complete tasks independently .... _____
8. I choose a variety of centres/activities .... _____
9. I clean up at clean up time........ _____
10. I keep the classroom tidy........ _____

(continued)

SELF HELP SKILLS

1. I know my telephone number/address .... ____
2. I take care of myself and my belongings .... ____
3. I dress/undress myself .... ____
4. I can do my zipper/buttons on my coat .... ____

PHYSICAL SKILLS AND WELL BEING

FINE MOTOR SKILLS

1. I print my first name .... ____
2. I can hold and cut with scissors .... ____
3. I find it easy to cut with scissors .... ____
4. I am holding a pencil properly .... ____

The three things I like to do BEST at school are:

1.

2.

3.

At school I like to play with these friends:

CHILD/PARENT COMMENTS

CHILD-LED KINDERGARTEN CONFERENCE AGENDA

Name: ______________________________

(child's illustration)

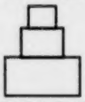
Welcome to our March Child-led Conference

Your child will be sharing many important aspects of his/her learning with you—showing you some of the things that have been accomplished as well as demonstrating learning by doing some activities with you. Please check off each item as it is completed, ask questions and write down comments. The agenda items can be done in any order unless there are any highlighted items which should be done first.

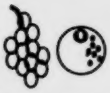
Today is set aside for celebration. Take time to enjoy doing all the activities with your child. Your child will be the leader. Come follow . . . and learn . . . about and from, your child! If you have any detailed questions or concerns about what you see today please sign up for an interview with me.

Have fun and thank you for coming!

(continued)

Activity	Suggested questions to ask your child
First Things First	
• Introduce your guest to ______________ (teacher) • Put your name card in the pocket chart.	
Language Arts (talking, listening, reading, viewing, representing and writing)	
• Pick a poem from our class poem pocket. • Teach your guest the actions.	What is a poem?
• Share your favourite big book. Have your guest write down the title. 📖	Who is the main character in the story? How do I find out who wrote the story?
• Show your guest your flagged favourite ✏ notebook page. Talk about it.	Why do you like this page? When do you write in your notebook?
Mathematics (exploring numbers, patterns, shape, space, statistics and problem solving)	
• Roll the big dice four times. ⚄ • Count the dots. _____ _____ _____ _____	What else can you do with the dice?
• Build two patterns using the tub materials. You can build the pattern and ask your guest to extend it. ○□○□	Describe your pattern.
Community and Environmental Awareness	
• Visit the water, sand, block or art centre. Choose only one. Build a structure together. 	What should we do? How do you look after this centre?

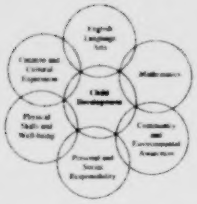
(continued)

Activity	Suggested questions to ask your child
Personal and Social Responsibility	☺ Almost Always 😐 Sometimes ☹ Not Often
• Ask your guest to read each sentence. Draw the happy face that matches your feeling. ☺	
1. I listen to my teacher and my friends when they are speaking.	○
2. I work and play well with my friends.	○
3. I help others.	○
4. I take care of things in our classroom.	○
5. I help clean-up.	○
• Tell your guest your first and last name and your telephone ☎ number. Write them down if you can.	Can you write your name and phone number or should I help you?
Give your guests a tour of your favourite place in our classroom. Explain what you do there.	Why do you like this place the best?
Physical Skills and Well-being (healthy food, safety rules, physical activity)	
• Share your paper plate collage of healthy food. 	What is your favourite healthy snack?
• Balance in, on, under and behind _______chair. (teacher's)	Try to hold your balance until I count to 5.
Creative and Cultural Expression	
• Watch our class slide show when _______ flicks the lights. (teacher)	What is the name of the song the class is singing? Which slide did you make?

(continued)

Activity	Suggested questions to ask your child
Last But Not Least • Ask your guest to write a short comment about your conference on a Post It Note and stick it on the classroom door.	

(continued)



The *Kindergarten Program Statement* provides learner expectations in six learning areas. The learner expectations are integrated through developmentally appropriate activities.

Parent Evaluation

Date ____________________

Dear Parents:

Thank you for taking time to be here today. Your involvement in your child's activities and progress means a lot. Your child feels a great sense of pride and accomplishment in sharing his/her work with you. You have seen and participated in part of your child's program.

I would greatly appreciate any comments you have to make about this method of conferring. They will assist me in planning future conferences.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this information sheet and for coming to celebrate your child's success. Please leave this sheet and the agenda in the box by the door. I look forward to your continued involvement throughout the school year.

Keep smiling,

____
Teacher

PARENT–TEACHER CONFERENCE FORM

A Reflection on Your Child

1. How do you view your child's social development (getting along with others and interacting in a group setting)?

2. What do you notice about your child's physical development; e.g., balance, coordination, pencil grasp, cutting?

3. What kinds of activities is your child interested in?

4. What do you see as your child's strengths?

5. What goals would you like to set for your child?

6. What other information would you like to share about your child?

7. What other information would you like to know about your child?

SAMPLE KINDERGARTEN PROGRESS REPORT
NOVEMBER

Child's Name: Hector R.
Age (as of Sept. 1): 4.10

Dear Families,

We've gotten off to a great start, as your children have become acquainted with each other, and classroom routines. This report is the first of three you will receive this year. It contains comments describing your child's progress in each of the six learning areas of the *Kindergarten Program Statement*. We will have the opportunity to discuss your questions or concerns about this report at the conferences next week.

Looking forward to seeing you!

Teacher's signature

English Language Arts

Hector engages in reading and writing behaviours eagerly, sharing favourite books with classmates in the library centre, and writing his name on all his artwork. He listens attentively and is able to recall significant events in stories he's heard. Though he enjoys expressing his own opinions, he does not yet show much interest in those of his classmates.

Mathematics

Hector is eager to learn number concepts. Please support his interest at home by providing him with plenty of opportunities to count objects in a set to 10. Family games involving comparing sets of objects would build Hector's knowledge of number concepts also. Hector is learning to identify and create patterns. He enjoys classroom games which reinforce patterning concepts.

Community and Environmental Awareness

Hector has been exploring scientific concepts in the sand and water centres, using plastic cups and spoons. He enjoys counting the spoonfuls it takes to fill cups of various sizes. He's able to identify circle and triangle shapes in the environment, but is not yet comfortable with the word "square". He is very vocal about expressing his likes and dislikes, especially at snack time! Everyone knows Hector "hates" carrots! At first, he was convinced that snack time signalled "time to go home", but now he understands that we still have some work left to do following snack.

(continued)

Personal and Social Responsibility

Hector is displaying positive attitudes towards learning this year. He participates actively in learning tasks; however, he does need to be encouraged to complete those he begins. Hector has become more responsive when asked to follow the rules and routines that have been established in the classroom and library. Recently, he learned his phone number, which pleased him.

Physical Skills and Well-being

Hector's gross motor skills are developing well—he runs, hops and jumps with good balance and agility. His fine motor skills are coming along as he gains more experience with activities such as cutting with scissors and building with lego. He is concentrating on learning to tie his shoes, insisting on doing it "all by myself"!

Creative and Cultural Expression

Hector is beginning to express his thoughts through music and drama. He has lost the shy manner he displayed in September and now can often be found in the Dramatic Play centre involved in puppet play or a sing song. Hector is developing improved confidence when problem solving.

Child's Signature: ____________________

Teacher's Signature: ____________________

Principal's Signature: ____________________

Parent's Signature: ____________________

____
Date

CHILD/PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCE

I will start conferencing with parents in ____________ to share observations on how your child has adjusted to school. I encourage you to involve your child in this process.

Children are invited to accompany their parents to the school for our shared discussion during the child/parent/teacher conferences. You will be asked to complete with your child three activities in the classroom before our scheduled time. You will want to plan about 15–20 minutes in the classroom before our scheduled time. You will want to plan about 15 minutes for conferencing with me. A week or two before interviews I will ask you to complete with your child their own "learning progress form". The purpose of this form is to encourage dialogue between you and your child and to see what their perceptions are about school and learning. The form will be sent to you closer to our scheduled interview time. The learning progress form will be used as the basis of our shared discussion.

I will be available the following dates for conferences. Conference times are scheduled for 15 minutes unless requested longer. Remember: you will want to plan an additional 15 minutes in the classroom with your child to complete the 3 planned activities.

Dates: ____

Times: ____

Please complete the bottom portion of this page and send it back to school before ________________.

You will be sent a confirmation of your date and time through the Friday envelope.

Sincerely,

____
Kindergarten Teacher

✂ -

INTERVIEWS

Please write the day(s) and time(s) you would be available to meet for a scheduled conference with your child and __________________ (teacher's name). Then send this lower portion back to school.

____

____

Child's Name: ______________________________________

Parent's Name: _____________________________________

Telephone Number: __________________________________

SAMPLE KINDERGARTEN REPORTING PROCEDURES

Dear Families,

One of the most joyful experiences the children and I share in Kindergarten is showing you, their families, how much they have grown and learned. This is an on-going process that includes the following:

Projects Sent Home: These include both teacher-directed and self-chosen projects that don't fit easily into your child's "Remember Book". When your child brings them home, it's important that you show your interest by asking open-ended questions, such as:

> "What can you tell me about this?", "How did you make this?" or
> "What part of this project did you enjoy the most?"

Snack Day visits: When you help out on your child's snack day, or any day you're available, please give 24 hours notice so we can plan to put you to good use! When you are in the classroom you will have the opportunity to observe your child interacting in the classroom environment. Notice whether your child pays attention, follows directions, asks relevant questions, gets along well with classmates, and behaves confidently.

Child-Centred Conferences: Twice during the year, you will be invited to participate in our centre-based conferences. At these times your child will actively demonstrate his/her understanding of a variety of concepts related to literacy, numeracy, and fine motor skill development. You will complete a checklist of observable behaviour while your child completes tasks in several special centres set up in the Kindergarten. This year, the conference dates are **December 5 (evening) and December 6, and March 20 (evening) and March 21.** Watch for details!

Written Progress Reports: You will receive three written progress reports; in November, March and June:

> ***November***: Each family is invited to submit up to three questions regarding their child's growth and development in Kindergarten, on a form created for this purpose. After I've answered your questions, I will keep one copy at school for your child's cumulative file and send the original home prior to the conference.
>
> ***March***: You will receive an anecdotal report concerning your child's development in the areas of Physical Skills and Well-being, and Personal and Social Responsibility. These are two of the six learning areas outlined in the *Kindergarten Program Statement* from Alberta Learning. One copy will be kept in your child's cumulative file and one will be sent home.
>
> ***June***: You will receive a final report on your child's progress over the Kindergarten year, including a checklist featuring the other four learning areas: Language Arts, Mathematics, Community and Environmental Awareness, and Creative and Cultural Expression. At this time, you will also receive a written summary of your child's strengths and areas of concern, together with my recommendation for programming for the following year. Your child's file should now contain 5 documents: the November parent's questionnaire, two conference checklists, the March report, and the final June report.

Spontaneous Inquiries: I welcome your questions any time and I am available on Fridays for confidential discussions. Please telephone for an appointment!

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Dear Parents,

Your "**CELEBRATION OF LEARNING**" has been confirmed for ______________ from ________________________. Please come to the Kindergarten classroom. Use the side entrance as the front doors may be locked. I will be available from ____________________ to discuss any concerns/questions you may have regarding your child's growth and progress.

The "**CELEBRATION OF LEARNING**" is an opportunity for your child to demonstrate and show you what they have or what they are learning in the classroom. As well it is an opportunity for you to observe how your child learns and how he/she interacts/uses the materials. Come prepared to be involved in the activities with your child.

The activities have been broken down into the components of our *Kindergarten Program Statement*. The activities chosen are only a sampling of the choices that are available to the children on a weekly basis in the program. Your child does not have to complete each activity—only the ones chosen to share with you. We are just learning graphing skills and are not experts yet.

I ask that you bring the attached "**CELEBRATION OF LEARNING**" form with you during your class visit. After you have participated in the activities with your child I am going to ask you and your child to reflect on the learning experiences in the classroom and respond to the questions on the sheet. You can either do this in classroom time or later at home. However, I would like you to return the form after you have completed it so that it can be added to your child's scrapbook.

1. **I (child) am proud of ...**
   Ask your child questions like these: What are you proud of? What do you think you do well? What do you like to do at school?
2. **My parents are proud of ...**
   What positive accomplishments would you like to compliment/share with your child after doing the activities together?
3. **My wish ... (the child's)**
   Ask your child one thing he/she hopes to achieve or be better at this term with your help. A goal!
4. **My parents wish ...**
   What one goal would you like your child to achieve or to be better at this term with your help.

It is my hope that the "**CELEBRATION OF LEARNING**" will be a positive, rewarding experience for your child and family as you celebrate your child's successes in this first formal year of school/education. I look forward to meeting with you on ______________________.

Sincerely,

____

Kindergarten Teacher

CELEBRATION OF LEARNING

Child-led Parent Conference

Teacher: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

School: ______________________________

Go to each of the following centers during your visit. Read the activities to/with your child and try completing some of them together. You may visit the centres in any order and do any number of the activities in each area.

CENTRES	COMMENTS
MATHEMATICS 1. Tell your family that we have been learning about surveys and graphs. Look over the graphs in the hallway. Explain what the graphs tell you. 2. Make a dinosaur graph or a cookie graph. You may have 2 cookies from the box. 3. Make a junk pattern or a coloured square pattern. Have your family read it. Is it a repeating pattern? 4. Read over some of our number chants. Tell your parents if it is an adding story (+) or taking away story (–). 5. Spend some time on the computer.	**I (CHILD) AM PROUD OF**
READING/WRITING 1. Share/read one of our poems with your family. Can you find any known words? 2. Read your chosen work with your families. Take home our "Princess Kimberley" story. 3. Look through your journal. Show your parents your stories and writing. You may add one tonight and try to write down your message. 4. Play the alphabet fishing game. What letter/sounds do you know? 5. Listen/watch a story on the tape recorder/finder. **Note**: Families can refer to the back sheet to see the various developmental stages in writing or check our writing board.	**MY PARENTS ARE PROUD OF**

CENTRES	COMMENTS
SCIENCE 1. Show your family how to light up a light, or 2. Use batteries and motors to make a moving machine, or 3. Fly the rocketship (balloon) to the moon. What makes the balloon go? 4. Share with your family what you are learning about magnets. Does a magnet work in sand? Does a magnet work in water? What objects does a magnet pick up? Can you make the magnets dance or a snake, kite stand up? 5. Spend time in the paleontology lab. Show your family how you keep track of your bones, by matching, recording, weighing and measuring them. 6. Share your bone experiment and observation with your family. 7. Look over our "world of water". 8. Show your family the dinosaur teeth. Which are plant eaters? Which are meat eaters?	**MY WISH** **(or my goal for myself)**
SOCIAL STUDIES 1. Share your dragons and dragon story with your family (portfolio). 2. Show your family our medieval weapons. 3. Show your family our moon recordings and moon sheet in your portfolio/scrapbook. 4. Share your castle sheet in your portfolio. 5. Share your Fireman Fuller sheet with your family (portfolio).	
ART 1. Share your pictures and stories found around the classroom, and in your scrapbook. 2. Take home your jewelled dragon.	**MY PARENT'S WISH**
HAVE A TALK WITH THE TEACHER AT THE CONFERENCE TABLE.	
SHARE JUICE AND COOKIES.	

Student's Name: ____________________
Parent(s) Name: ____________________

KINDERGARTEN OPEN HOUSE—SPRING

Welcome to our Open House. Here is a list of things you may wish to do together this morning. These do not have to be done in order. If one activity is busy, go on to another and come back later. Please feel free to write additional comments on the back of this sheet.

Child's Commentary	Parent Comments
• Let's read the morning message together. It is on the white board at the front of the room. – See how I can sound out the first letter of the words. – Note the words I know by sight.	
• Let me share my Journal work with you. It is at a table in the classroom. – Look at how well I print, draw and spell words on my own. – Please write a note to me on one of my journal pages.	
• Let's visit the Mathematics Centre activities set out at the table. – Please read the instructions to me for each activity, and discuss with me what I'm doing so I can share my understandings with you.	
• Let's do a Fine Motor activity together. It is set up at one of the classroom tables. – Please read the instructions to me. – Look how well I can cut, paste and colour the pictures. – See what a great job I did at drawing my own robot.	
• Let's listen to a story at the listening centre. I will show you where everything is. – Ask me to hold the book and follow (track) the words with my finger. – Notice my fantastic book handling skills (track the print from left to right, top of the page to the bottom; turn the page; go to read the left page before the right).	
• We have a number of games at the computer. Let me show you how to play one. – The games helps me to: • identify and count numbers • review my patterning skills • become familiar with the computer keyboard.	
• Let me show you our bulletin board display in the hallway.	
• Ask me how we made our fishes.	
• Let me show you the photographs taken during Kindergarten. They are in the library.	
• If TIME let me show you my favourite centre. Do we have time to work at this centre.	

PARENT/TEACHER/CHILD CONFERENCE

Child: ______________________ Date: ______________________

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:
MATHEMATICS:
COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS:
PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:
PHYSICAL SKILLS AND WELL-BEING:
CREATIVE AND CULTURAL EXPRESSION:
FOCUS FOR FUTURE:
Signed: ______________ Teacher ______________ Parent ______________ Child

SAMPLE KINDERGARTEN INTERVIEW SHEET FOR FIRST REPORTING PERIOD

Student: ___________________________

Birth Date: ___________________________

Conference Date: ______________________

1. Child's Contribution:

   What is important about Kindergarten? ______________________________

   Who do you care about at school? ______________________________

   What do you do well? What is your favourite centre? ____________________

   What would you like to learn? ______________________________

2. Parent(s)' Comments, Questions:

3. Teacher's Remarks:

4. Academic Growth:

5. Social and Emotional Growth:

6. Physical Development:

7. People in Attendance:

Work Shown __________

HOME VISIT SUMMARY OR IMPRESSION

DATE:

CHILD AND FAMILY VISITED:

TEACHER/SPECIALIST WHO WENT ON THE VISIT:

ACTIVITIES:

SUMMARY/IMPRESSION OF THE VISIT:

FOLLOW-UP REQUIRED:

CELEBRATING MÉTIS CULTURE IN THE KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM

Overall study goals include:

- providing learning experiences that build on the child's background
- enhancing the child's awareness of Métis culture
- providing learning experiences that strengthen the child's self-esteem
- integrating language learning, mathematics, art, social studies, science concepts through out activities
- involving the children in the creation of bulletin board materials that support their daily learning—using the visual to enhance the child's ability to recall important concepts
- exposing the child to new Cree, French, and English words, colours and numbers.

At the end of the study, the child will be able to share what she/he has learned by answering these questions:

- What does the term Métis mean?
- Did you know that you are Métis? (Note: Some parents/children may not wish to disclose this information.)
- What kind of life did the Métis have in the past?
- What kind of life do the Métis have today?

Kindergarten instructor/teacher goals are:

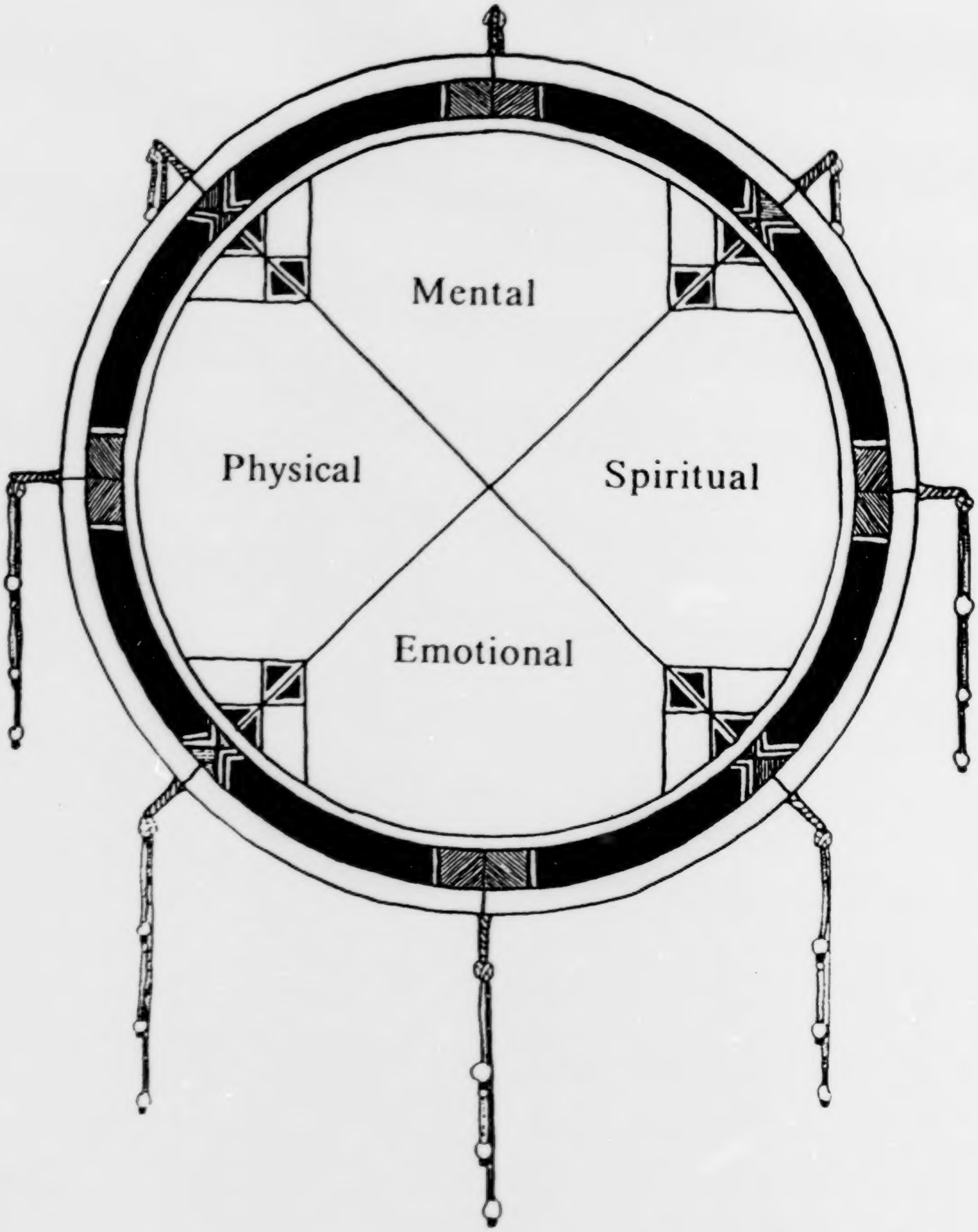
- to continually ask myself "Is the child developmentally ready for this concept?"
- to watch and observe each child as they learn new concepts
- to ask myself "Have I met this goal with this child?"
- to adapt/include new concepts as they emerge from the child's thinking and interests
- to begin and end each day with CIRCLE TIME (e.g., Circle Time is used to review previous concepts and to introduce new concepts. This is an evaluation process built into the natural learning environment. The information gained from Circle Time is used to revise concepts and to adjust to the learning pace of the child.)

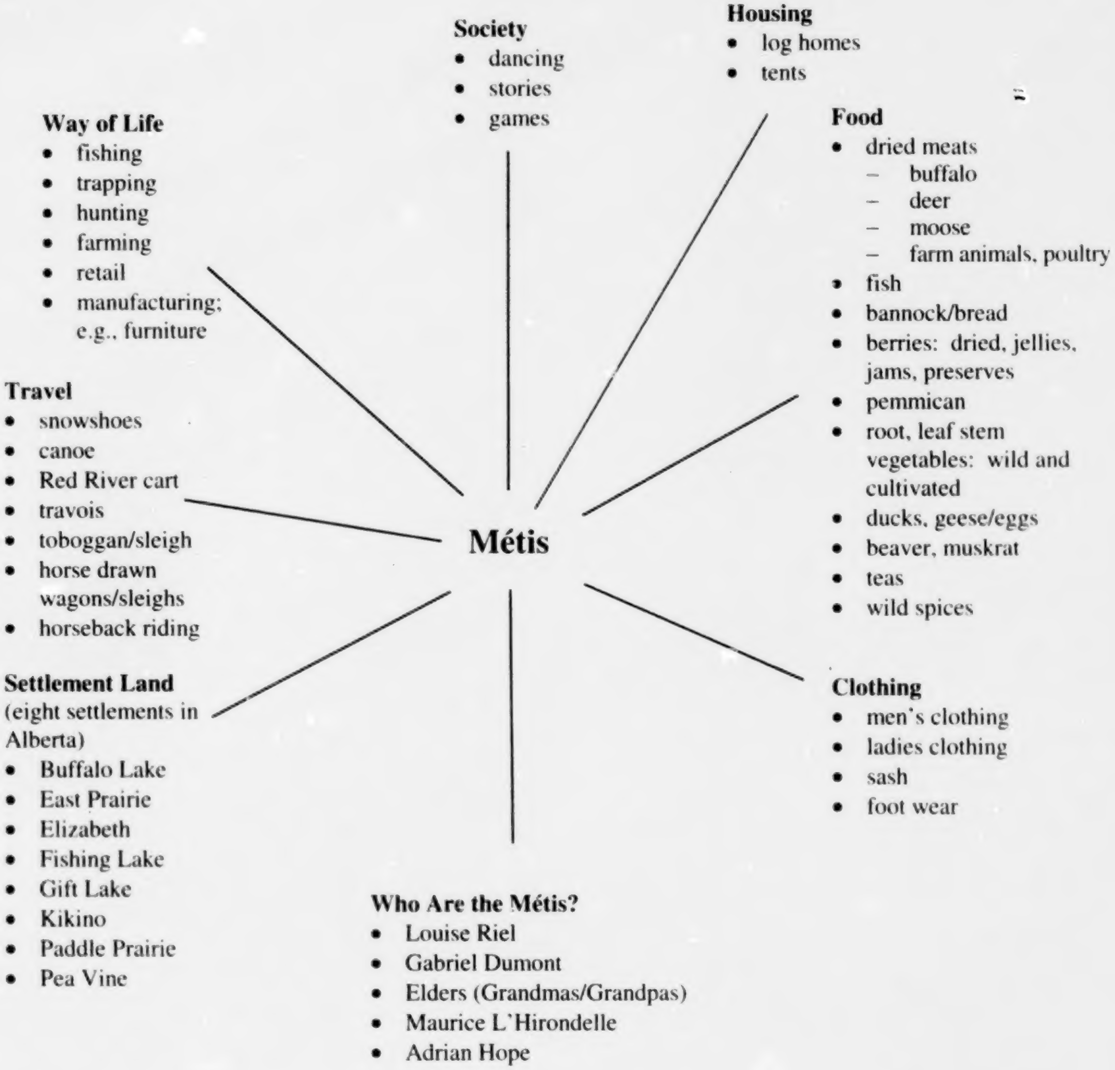
Process

- Adults and Elders are invited into the classroom for Métis history lessons, music/dance lessons—e.g., jig—and sharing of the traditional Métis feast foods—e.g., moose sausage, hamburger stew, berries, bannock.
- Donations of food, time, books, storytelling, music and pelts—e.g., Beaver, Coyote—are provided by the parents.
- As the children learn from the adults and Elders, they draw and create materials that reinforce what they have learned in this sharing time. They display their creations on the bulletin boards.
- Several books on Métis culture are used in story telling time.
- Centres are also used to reinforce learning.
- Emergent curriculum—additional ideas and interests of the children are addressed throughout the study.

THE MEDICINE WHEEL

– A Holistic Approach –


Mental
Physical
Spiritual
Emotional



Métis

Society
- dancing
- stories
- games

Housing
- log homes
- tents

Food
- dried meats
  - buffalo
  - deer
  - moose
  - farm animals, poultry
- fish
- bannock/bread
- berries: dried, jellies, jams, preserves
- pemmican
- root, leaf stem vegetables: wild and cultivated
- ducks, geese/eggs
- beaver, muskrat
- teas
- wild spices

Clothing
- men's clothing
- ladies clothing
- sash
- foot wear

Who Are the Métis?
- Louise Riel
- Gabriel Dumont
- Elders (Grandmas/Grandpas)
- Maurice L'Hirondelle
- Adrian Hope

Settlement Land
(eight settlements in Alberta)
- Buffalo Lake
- East Prairie
- Elizabeth
- Fishing Lake
- Gift Lake
- Kikino
- Paddle Prairie
- Pea Vine

Travel
- snowshoes
- canoe
- Red River cart
- travois
- toboggan/sleigh
- horse drawn wagons/sleighs
- horseback riding

Way of Life
- fishing
- trapping
- hunting
- farming
- retail
- manufacturing; e.g., furniture

WHEN SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?
EARLY CHILDHOOD GUIDELINES FOR SPEECH REFERRALS

ARTICULATION

1. The following sounds should be developed by the time a child reaches Kindergarten.

/p/ /w/ /g/ /d/

/m/ /h/ /k/ /n/(ing) /y/ (as in yellow)

/n/ /b/ /f/ /t/

*Often children will say "lellow" for yellow—this is usually the only word starting with /y/ that they mispronounce.

If a child is substituting (/A/ for /k/, /d/ for /g/, t/k, d/g ....), omitting (-/h, -/m ...) or distorting any of the above sounds, refer to the speech therapist.

2. Common articulation errors for 4-6 years olds:

/w/ for /l/ /th/ for /s/ /th/ for /dz/ (juice)

/w/ for /r/ /th/ for /z/ /s/ for /sh/

/f/ for /th/ /th/ for /sh/ /ts/ for /ch/

/b/ for /v/ /th/ for /ch/

Refer to the speech therapist if a child has 3 or more of these errors in his speech. Also, refer to therapist if the s, z, sn, cn or dz sounds are "whistley" (lateral distortion).

3. If the answer is "yes" to any of the following questions, please refer.

- Is the child difficult to understand?
- Is the child aware of his/her speech problem?
- Does the speech problem interfere with the child's ability to communicate?
- Is the child teased by peers?
- Is the child reluctant to communicate?
- Does the child have numerous repetitions of words, sounds and phrases? (stuttering)
- Does the child avoid words that begin with certain sounds?
- Is the child embarrassed by his/her speech?

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

1. By the time a child reaches Kindergarten, his/her language development should be almost completed.

2. Common errors for 4 & 5 year olds

- uses regular past tense or irregular verbs (runned/ran; seed/saw; and sawed/saw)
- adds "ed" instead of "t" ending to regular past tense (e.g., jumpeded/jumped)

3. Refer a child if you notice the following:

- missing parts of speech (boy jump/the boy is jumping)
- omission of "little words" (a, the, and, ...)
- confusion of genders (he/she)
- use of me/I, she/her, her/she ...
- majority of sentences are only 2-3 words in length
- excessive use of "filler words"—e.g., these, this, this thing here, this hers, um, you know
- general "baby talk"
- difficulty in naming common objects/items, etc.

Hearing:

Refer to testing if:

- child does not respond to his/her name
- child continually asks to have things repeated
- child appears to "day dream"
- you suspect any kind of hearing problem
- child has a cold continuously
- child's ears appear to be draining or if they are encrusted (probably should refer to nurse as well).

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LEARNING STYLES: TEACHER OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Sound

- ___ Does quality work during quiet work time
- ___ Does quality work during regular work time
- ___ Does quality work with music in background
- ___ Complains when there is too much sound
- ___ Has difficulty remaining quiet during quiet work time
- ___ Makes sounds or noises while working
- ___ Reminds others to be quiet while working

Classroom Design

- ___ Has difficulty sitting properly
- ___ Enjoys lying down while listening to stories
- ___ Sits correctly during work periods
- ___ Stands by work area during work periods

Structures

- ___ Likes to complete projects independently
- ___ Likes to complete projects step by step
- ___ Keeps work area neat
- ___ Tends to misplace supplies

Social Tendencies

- ___ Likes to work or play with a group
- ___ Likes to work or play with a teacher nearby
- ___ Likes to work or play alone
- ___ Creates opportunities to visit with teachers

Responsibilities

- ___ Completes projects quickly and neatly
- ___ Completes projects quickly but not neatly
- ___ Completes projects slowly and neatly
- ___ Completes projects slowly but not neatly
- ___ Does not always complete projects
- ___ Works best when given specific instructions
- ___ Cleans up work area on completing task
- ___ Needs reminding to clean up work area
- ___ Is easily distracted while working on a project
- ___ Remembers assignments

Mobility

- ___ Leaves chair frequently during work periods
- ___ Often makes excuses to move around the classroom
- ___ Is extremely active during free play periods

Motivation

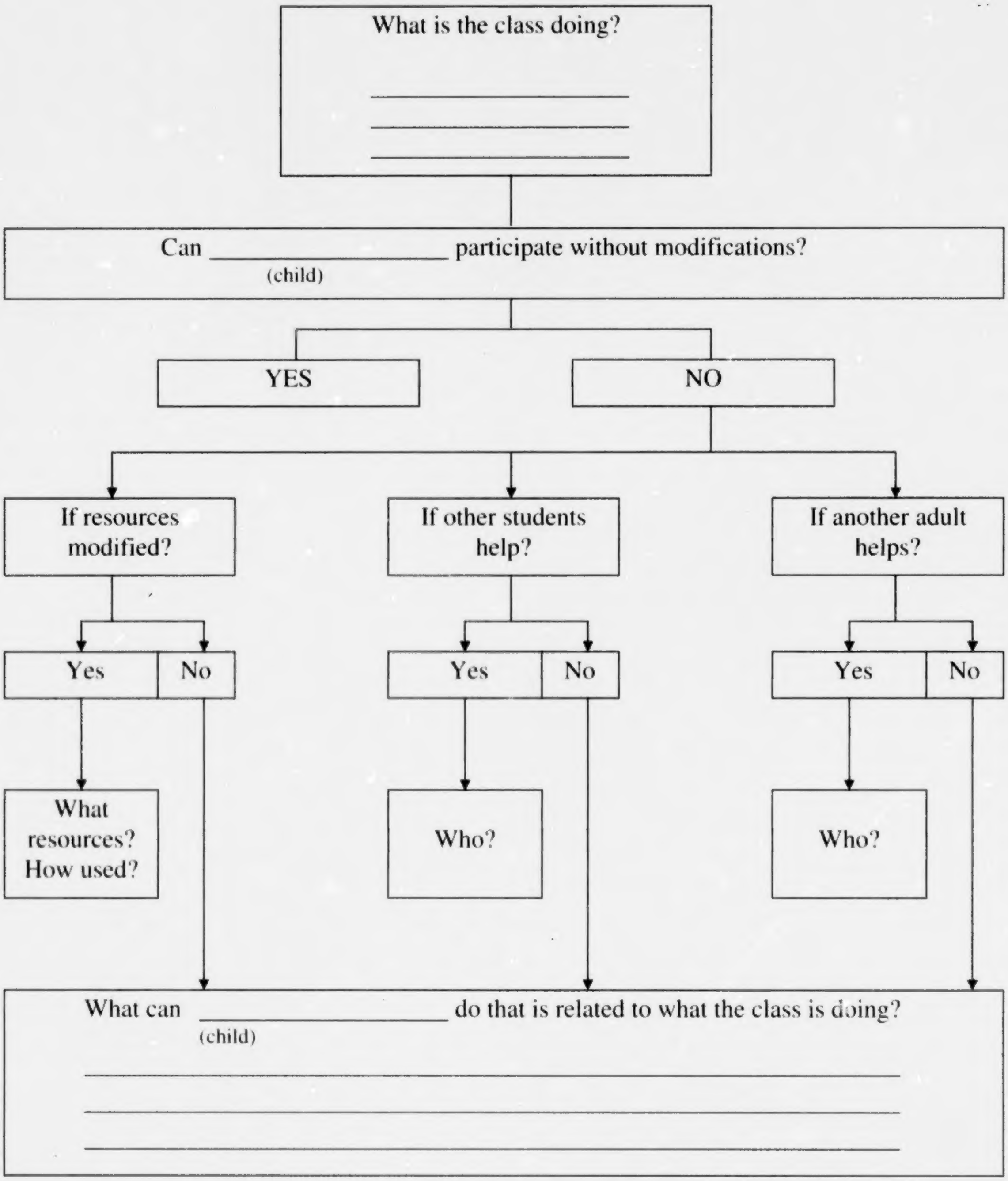
- ___ Works best with much assurance from others
- ___ Needs teacher feedback while working
- ___ Works best when allowed to be creative
- ___ Initiates projects
- ___ Volunteers information about projects and discussion topics

Perception

- ___ Enjoys books and filmstrips
- ___ Is attentive during story time
- ___ Likes to hear records or tapes during work time
- ___ Remembers what others say
- ___ Likes to visit classmates
- ___ Enjoys playing with toys with small pieces
- ___ Likes to draw or doodle
- ___ Likes to move around during work or play
- ___ Likes to create and react to play situations

From "Empowering students with style," by R.R. Neely and D. Alm, 1993, *Principal*, 72(4), p. 33. Reprinted with permission.

MODIFICATION PLANNING FORM


What is the class doing?
Can ____________ participate without modifications?
(child)
YES
NO
If resources modified?
If other students help?
If another adult helps?
Yes
No
Yes
No
Yes
No
What resources? How used?
Who?
Who?
What can ____________ do that is related to what the class is doing?
(child)

From Edmonton Public School District No. 7. Reprinted with permission.

KINDERGARTEN
SPECIAL NEEDS DAILY REPORTING

Date: ____________________

Name: ____________________

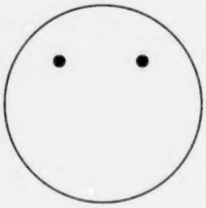
Today in Kindergarten I ____

____

____

____

This is how I felt:



I worked on ____

____

____

____

Teachers/Therapist Comments: ____

____

____

____

____

Parent Comments: ____

____

____

____

____

INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAM PLANS (IPP) CHECKLIST

Process	☐	The school administrator assigns a teacher the primary responsibility for heading the team to develop the IPP.
	☐	The school administrator ensures that the IPP is prepared, implemented and evaluated.
	☐	The parents and students (where appropriate), have had the opportunity for a meaningful involvement in the development of the IPP.
	☐	Team meetings are held to review all evaluation data and to develop or revise the IPP.
	☐	There is a plan for monitoring (review dates, assessment procedures) the IPP.
	☐	The IPP is reviewed formally, at least once, annually.
	☐	A copy of the IPP is given to parents in the fall and a copy is available to teachers who are directly involved in the delivery of the program.
	☐	Both the parents and the students (where appropriate) have given informed consent and are aware of the implications of any modifications.
Essential Information	☐	The IPP contains a description of the current assessed level of educational performance for each area of educational content in which a special education need has been identified.
	☐	The IPP contains long-term goals that describe what the student can be expected to accomplish within a specified period.
	☐	The IPP contains short-term objectives that are measurable intermediate steps between the current assessed level of educational performance and the long-term goals.
	☐	The IPP includes an identification of the special education and related services to be provided.
	☐	The IPP includes a statement of the student's identified areas of need and strengths.
	☐	The IPP includes an identification of any required classroom accommodations.
	☐	The IPP includes review dates, results and recommendations for each short-term objective.
	☐	The IPP includes a statement of any relevant medical information.
	☐	The IPP includes plans for transition.
Implementation	☐	The results and recommendations of the review are recorded on the IPP.
	☐	The goals and objectives are adjusted according to the results of the monitoring.
	☐	Special education and related services are available to support the implementation of the IPP.
	☐	The required classroom accommodations identified on the IPP are being implemented.
	☐	The results of the IPP reviews are used to assess and revise student programs and placement (where appropriate).

KINDERGARTEN
INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAM PLAN—SAMPLE
SCHOOL YEAR

Child's Name: ______________________

Date of Birth: ______________________

Age as of Sept. 1st: ______________________

Parent(s) Names: ______________________

Address: ______________________

Telephone: ______________________

School: ______________________

Program: ______________________

Year in the Program: ______________________

Teacher: ______________________

IPP Coordinator: ______________________

Assessment Record			**Services Record**	
Test	Date	Administered By:	Services	Year

Strengths and Interests

Medical and Developmental History

PEOPLE AT HOME AND AT SCHOOL HELPING

____
(child)

ACHIEVE HER GOALS

Parent(s):

Teacher:

Teacher Assistant(s):

Occupational Therapist:

Speech Therapist:

IPP Coordinator:

Psychologist:

Other:

SIGNATURES (indicate that you are familiar with the goals developed)

	NOVEMBER	MARCH	JUNE
Parent(s)			
Teacher			
Teacher Assistant(s)			
Occupational Therapist			
Speech Therapist			
Psychologist			
IPP Coordinator			

September

Dear Parents,

I'm writing to ask you to help me become a partner with you in your child's education. I will only have your child for a short time in this trip through life—just one fleeting school year—and I want to make a contribution to their learnings that will last a lifetime.

I know my teaching must begin with making your child feel at home in their classroom, and with helping all the children come together into a learning community made up of particular, unique individuals, each with his or her own learning style, interests, history and hopes. Would you help me teach well by taking a quiet moment to write me about your child? What is your youngster like? What are the things you, as a parent, know that would be important for me to know? What are your child's interests? I want to know how your child thinks and plays and how you see your child as a learner and a person. I would also like to know what you hope your child will gain this year in kindergarten.

Please take some time to fill out this questionnaire. You may fill this out while you wait, or take it home with you to be returned later. You may answer the questions by short answer form or if you prefer you can write a paragraph or two.

Thank you for your help,

Kindergarten Teacher

Attachment

(continued)

Child's Name: ______________________________

Kindergarten Program—Child Information

1. **Physical Development**:
   Is there any information that you feel would be useful to us with regard to your child's physical development; e.g., age of walking, activity level, hand preference, ability to use pencils, scissors?

   ____
   ____
   ____

   Are there any health conditions of which we should be aware; e.g., past serious illnesses, allergies, current medications?

   ____
   ____
   ____

   Is there any information that would be useful with regard to your child's home routines; e.g., eating and sleeping habits?

   ____
   ____

2. **Language Development**:
   Is there any information that might be useful with regard to your child's speech; e.g., age at which he/she began to talk, any speech difficulties, language spoken at home?

   ____
   ____
   ____

3. **Social Development**:
   Does your child have other children at or near home with which to play? Please indicate their ages.

   ____
   ____

   Has your child attended any other programs where he/she was with other children of similar ages? Please describe the type of program.

   ____
   ____

   How did your child appear to relate to the other children in these programs?

   ____
   ____

(continued)

Child's Name: ______________________________

4. **Emotional Development**:
Is there any information which might be useful with regard to such things as fears your child might have; e.g., the ways that you deal with your child's feelings of anger, fear, jealousy; your child's moods?

5. **Interests and Activities**
What kinds of activities does your child prefer when he/she is at home?

What particular interests does your child have?

What are his/her favourite places?

6. **Other Information**:
Are there any other persons living in your home apart from your immediate family?

______________________________ ______________________________
(Relationship)

Are there any special circumstances in the family that might affect your child's adjustment?

Who will be usually picking up your child when the program ends? Which people are allowed to pick up your child at any time? Are there any people that should not be allowed to pick up your child?

What do you hope your child will gain from being involved in our Kindergarten Program?

SAMPLE LETTER TO SUBSTITUTE/SUPPLY TEACHER

Hi! Welcome to kindergarten at ____________________ (name of school). Thanks for being a part of our classroom today. I thought you might find it useful to have some information about our school and in particular the kindergarten classroom.

School Principal ____________________ Assistant Principal ________________
Secretary ____________________ Office Support Staff ________________

School Times ____________________ Kindergarten Class Times
School Recess ____________________ A.M. ________________
P.M. ________________

Kindergarten Library Time ________________
Kindergarten Gym Time ________________
My Supervision Day/Times and Location ________________________

The following children in the a.m. class come to school and return home on the bus:

The following children in the a.m. class are brought to school and picked up by:

Child's name	Person responsible for pick up – relationship

All children in the p.m. kindergarten class are brought and picked up as follows:

Child's name	Person responsible for pick up – relationship

The following children have allergies or medical conditions you should know of:

A.M. Class		P.M. Class	
Child's name	Condition	Child's name	Condition

You will find the class list attached to this letter. The children do not wear name tags on a daily basis except for fieldtrips or other special occasions. You can locate the name tags in __________

The children will enter the classroom after they have hung up their jackets, backpacks and put on their indoor shoes. When they enter the classroom they will hang up their names and look at a book in the large group area until you give them the signal to put their books away. Our signal is ________________.

(continued)

GROUP TIME
This is our first group meeting time of our day. Attendance will need to be taken, notes or other concerns are addressed at this time. You will need to refer to my daily plans for any additional information that may need to be introduced to the children, i.e., introducing a new activity, reinforcing or reviewing the plan of the day.

ACTIVITY TIME
We now move into what we term activity time which comprises the bulk of our day (45 – 75 minutes). The children also refer to this as play time or centres. I have a pocket chart on the wall with pictures of the available centers. Many of the centres are self explanatory. Refer to my daily plans to see if you need to review the choices with the children. Children indicate to you which area they would like to start at. Children can choose to change centres. Depending on the centre they may need to clean up that area before moving into a new centre.

The water table needs to be filled up and emptied daily. Fill with hot water (it cools quickly) before the children enter. You can colour the water. Food colouring is ____________________.

Parent helpers are a part of our classroom. Please refer to my daily plans to see who will be in and what roles they may be involved in today. They are excellent resources!

CLEAN UP TIME
To signal to the children that you want their attention you can sing "Stop, Look & Listen." I use this song for a variety of reasons—if it is time to begin clean-up sing, then ask the children to begin; after clean up when it is time to gather in the group meeting area.

GROUP TIME
Often this is a longer period than the earlier group time. Stories, songs/poems, early literacy experiences, large group activities and/or review of the day may occur in this time period. Refer to my daily plans.

HOME TIME
Pass out any notes/children's work that I may have left for you. Children take home their school/classroom communication in their Friday envelopes. The Friday envelopes are located_________. To help with crowd control I use a variety of ideas to dismiss children; e.g., having children leave by the first letter of their name, colours of eyes, what they ate for breakfast. Have children take off their inside shoes before you dismiss them.

My teaching partner __________________ in room_________ is a great resource for help/clarification as are the children. Thank you for your help today. I appreciate your flexibility and patience.

Sincerely,

Kindergarten Teacher

SAMPLE LESSON PLANS FOR SUBSTITUTE/SUPPLY TEACHER

8:30 Entrance

8:35 Gather

8:40 Stories—You choose one story to read; the second story is chosen by child/ren

9:00 White Board—Classroom decision as to what could be done for Journal. Using exaggerated, extended pronunciation, have the class try to listen and guess for the consonant sounds of the word they have chosen, and you write them down on the board, leaving spaces for the "quiet letters", the vowels. They guess them after the consonants are recorded. From there, the children must tell you how to draw a picture of this . . .? They can't show you, nor point, nor use finger descriptors in the air; they use oral language with descriptive terms only. Then they can work on their own in their journals.

9:30 The class will do self-selected activities.

Computer time: I have a new CD-ROM program. The dots on the charts above the computer show whose turn is next. Each child gets a 15 minute turn, and I make sure the next person on the rotation is sitting in the chair beside, observing and learning where to continue from. Dot them up after they've had a turn.

Your job will be to "float", circulate, work with individuals, play with children, guide them, question them, intervene when conflict occurs, monitor the time, and challenge them. Conflicts are handled by asking, "Is there a problem here?" "What can we do to solve the problem?" "Do you need to talk it over with …?" Time out is used only if children can't seem to be responsive or responsible.

10:10 Call for "two minutes until clean-up", and at 10:12, call for "Clean-up time". The teacher task here is to help, yes, but more importantly, to monitor that everyone is helping with clean-up. They need to put things in proper places and tubs, and need to do a fair share of the work.

10:21 Recess time (an adult still accompanies them)

10:35 Snack. Ask, "Who brought snack? What type of food is it?" Then they can eat … They have to clean-up after themselves, putting cups and paper towels away, and pushing chairs in.

(continued)

10:45 Tuesday is Gym Day after recess—you can skip recess and do snack during that time if you wish, or do a shorter gym time after the snack break. Gym is usually explorative play with any of the materials. They've tried big balls, small rubber, bouncing balls, and hoops. Any of these would be fine again, or new materials would be exciting too. Do what you like to do.

Math tubs. By the rocking chair, there is a large tub with margarine containers containing two different coloured cubes. Children have only learned to do the ababab pattern, so they could show that to you. For Thursday, you might try to teach an abbabbabb pattern. They are to hold it up or bring it up to be checked with a quick scan, then take it apart. If time permits, they can select a new tub with different colours and try it again.

11:00 Dismissal

Afternoon Class:

Same routine as the morning but the times are different.

12:20 Entrance time

12:30 Gather, etc.

2:00–2:15 Recess

2:30 Clean-up (Tuesday is Gym Day as well, so you may want to miss the recess and do the clean-up and snack and then go to gym at 2:40)

2:40 Snack

2:58 Dismissal (Except for Thursday—its early dismissal at 2:00, and no snack in the afternoon)

THANKS FOR BEING OUR HELPER OF THE DAY

I appreciate that you were able to come to the classroom a little earlier today. This enables me to explain your duties/role for the day before all the children arrive. Thanks!!

When the children arrive they hang up their jackets, backpacks, etc. They enter the room and hang up their name tag. While they wait for all the children to arrive, they look at a book in the group area. During this time you can assist any children that may need help or you may be doing some classroom preparation. Once all the children are in, I sing 2 songs, which is the signal that we are going to begin our day. I have 2 group sessions, one at the beginning of the day and usually a longer group session at the end of our day. While I have the children in these large group sessions I will have asked you to do some of the following preparation work:

1. Help to put out and set up materials to be used during activity time.
2. Stuff the Friday envelopes.
3. Fill up the water table (a.m.) emptying (p.m.) We fill the water table with clean water daily for hygiene reasons and because it gets very cold overnight. The children will not play in it if it is cold. Morning parent please fill with hot water from our taps in the bathroom. Use the ice cream pails on the bottom of the shelf behind the water table. Add blue food colouring which is found on the middle shelf behind the water table. P.M. parent please empty the water table at the end of our day. Use the ice cream pails to scoop the water out of the table and put in the sinks.
4. At the end of the day, check to see if paint brushes or playdough items need to be washed. Tables should be wiped down. Soap and rags are kept on the bottom shelf behind the water table.
5. Add materials to children's individual scrap books/portfolios.
6. Prepare materials.
7. Mix paints.

If it is your first time into the classroom, I will introduce you to the children by your first name unless otherwise requested. You are welcome to arrive early or stay after class if you would like to be shown around the classroom.

After our first large group session you will be responsible for a centre. You will be introducing the centre, teaching a small group, or assisting or supervising a centre or centres. After children have completed the activity with you, they can choose another centre. You may asked to do any of the following in the classroom during centre time.

1. Read stories to the children.
2. Do puppet shows with the children.
3. Cook in small groups with children. Let the children measure and prepare as much as possible. When cooking, discuss what happens when something is added, e.g., flour and eggs. After snack let children wash dishes if they would like to be involved. Put away materials and utensils with interested children.

(continued)

4. Print stories, or help children to print their own, to go with pictures they have made.
5. Talk to and play with the children in various learning centres in the classroom, e.g., house, library, puzzles, sand, water.
6. Help the children with crafts—don't "fix-up" but provide encouragement or sometimes ideas.
7. Work with children on puzzles or games, e.g., puzzles—point out shapes of pieces. Look for similar outline of shapes.
8. Work with individual children as requested.
9. Assist children with using the computer.
10. Work with children at the woodworking centre.

In working with children, it should be remembered that we are trying to help them to grow more independent. For example, if some children cannot tie their shoes or zip up their jackets expect them to try and give them encouragement first before assisting. Ask children questions to encourage them to do the talking, e.g., Why? How many? What colour? Is there another way to do this? What else could we make? Questions such as these require the child to think for themselves and thus foster creativity.

When the children have been dismissed to get ready to go home, it would be appreciated if you could assist me with children that need help in getting dressed.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE TODAY. I WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO OFFER THE VARIETY OF EXPERIENCES IN THE CLASSROOM WITHOUT YOUR VALUABLE HANDS!!

PARENT RESOURCE INVENTORY

Name: ______________________________ Address: ______________________________

Name of Child in Program: ____

The purpose of this survey is to help identify the special interests, talents, backgrounds or resources, which you as parents, could share with the Kindergarten program. You may wish to participate by working with a small group of children, the entire class, or with the parent group. Your involvement as a parent enriches the program by adding another dimension to it as well as bringing in a sense of pride and satisfaction to yourself and your child.

Please indicate interests or skill that you have in any of the following areas.

OCCUPATIONAL: carpenter, geologist, librarian, mechanic, scientist, nurse, teacher, cook, police officer, fire fighter, butcher, painter, truck driver, other . . .

____

ARTISTIC/RECREATIONAL: painting, wood carving, gardening, sewing, dramatics, dancing, singing, music, photography, other . . .

____

BACKGROUND: customs, dress, food, music, dancing, language, crafts, festive traditions, other . . .

____

SPECIAL RESOURCES: pictures, slides, stamps, ... from other regions and countries; collections of stamps, rocks, ...; pets, antiques, pioneer artifacts, ...

____

VOLUNTEER FOR FIELD TRIPS: ____

SPECIAL INTERESTS OR ABILITIES: puppetry, magic tricks, storytelling, other . . .

____

I would enjoy doing some work at home: sewing, carpentry, developing photographs, other . . .

____

I would be interested in working on projects such as painting the "house play" furniture:

____

other ideas:____

____

PARENT VOLUNTEER SURVEY

Volunteering is a unique opportunity for parents to be involved first hand in their child's learning. Parents benefit by experiencing their child's learning environment, by knowing what curricular areas are being studied and by seeing their child in relation to his/her peers. The children also benefit by getting that special feeling that comes from parental interest. Teachers benefit by having an extra pair of hands and an increase in regular parent-teacher contact.

For some parents "traditional" daytime volunteering is not possible due to other obligations. For this reason I also try to provide a variety of volunteer choices so that sometime during the year everyone can participate in their child's learning. Remember you can also support your child and show interest by reading nightly, responding in their At-Home-Journal or playing with the Math Bag.

Please take a moment and complete this survey. This information will allow me to develop a regular volunteer schedule for those people who like to plan ahead. I will also call volunteers when a need arises.

Thank you in advance for returning this survey as soon as possible and for making a commitment to support your child.

- -

1. How often would you like to volunteer in the classroom?

   ___ occasionally ___ once a month ___ twice a month ___ weekly

2. What time of the day would you be available?

   ___ mornings
   ___ afternoons
   ___ evenings
   ___ anytime if work can be done at home

3. Please indicate the activities you would be interested in helping with:

   ___ working with small groups of children during class activities
   ___ reading with children
   ___ driving or supervising fieldtrips
   ___ preparing classroom materials
   ___ publishing student books (sewing, typing, editing)
   ___ sharing your expertise (job, crafts, story ...)

4. Additional ideas or comments are welcome:______________________________

   ____

   ____

Name ______________________________ Phone number____________________

Child's name______________________________.

NEW PARENT ORIENTATION
AGENDA

Nametags

Welcome and Principal's Message

Introductions: Background and experience of teacher and assistant

Program:

- *Kindergarten Program Statement*: Principles/Topics
- Child developmental principles
- Play as medium for learning; active learning
- Learning centres
- Music, literature, writing, pets, field trips, snack

- Show hospital web (large planning web displayed) and show how learning, play, and adult/teacher role supports child activities and growth.

- Show scrapbook, photo album, video clip, journals, class made big books.

Recess: Safety, comfort, learning

Parent Involvement: Open Door Policy, communication, LAC

Registration Procedures:

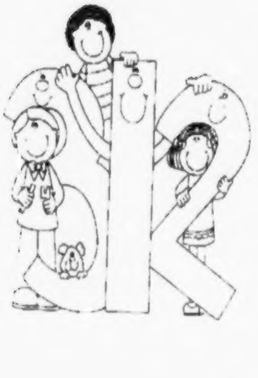
- June: Orientation for Parents
  Tour Days—bring child in to look at program in process
  Stay and Play Day for new children, others at home

- September: Registration Day
  Home Visits
  Staggered Entries
  Regular Attendance

SEPTEMBER PARENT ORIENTATION

1. Staff:
    Principal: ______________________________
    Assistant Principal: ______________________________
    Teacher: ______________________________
    Teacher-Assistant: ______________________________
    Nurse: ______________________________
    Secretaries: ______________________________
    Librarian: ______________________________

2. Program:
    a. Transition from Home
        - Critical as foundation for remainder of education
        - School environment
        - Belonging
        - Social nature
        - Responsibility
    b. Individual
        - Unique and special
        - Confidence
        - Freedom to risk, trust, love
    c. Development of the whole child
        - Social, Physical, Intellectual, Creative, Emotional, Cultural
    d. Curriculum
        - English Language Arts
        - Mathematics
        - Community and Environmental Awareness
        - Personal and Social Responsibility
        - Physical Skills and Well-being
        - Creative and Cultural Expression
    e. Technology



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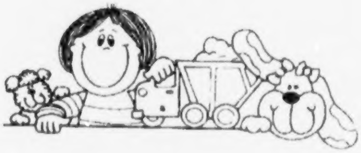
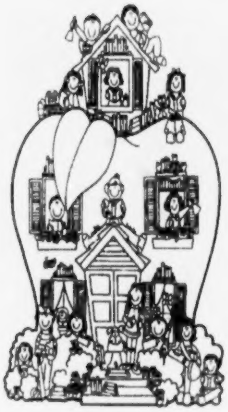
3. Method:
    a. Child-Centred
    b. Language Rich
    c. Developmentally Appropriate Practice
    d. Children's Interests and Needs
    e. Themes, projects, units, in-depth studies, field trips
    f. Discipline—safe for heart, mind, and body
    g. Reporting—Student-led Conferences



4. Routines:
    a. Schedule: gather, stories, journal, centres, recess, gym/library, other
    b. Centres—self-selection, choice, monitored, structured (toys), story corner, writing, music, manipulative, blocks, house, pets, science, math, puppets, sand, water, woodworking, art, computer
    c. Sharing versus Show & Tell
    d. Birthdays
    e. Entrance/Exit
    f. Recess
    g. Mail Boxes

5. Parents' Role:
    a. Open-door Policy
    b. Advisory and Participatory
    c. Communicating
    d. Advocacy for Program
    e. Parent Workshops/Education—(Learning Through Play, Reading with Your Child, Children's Writing, Young Children's Literature, other . . .)
    f. LAC—Parent Committee

Executive – Chair
Vice-Chair
Secretary
School Council Representative (first Monday)
Social
Parent Education
Phoning
Function – ideas, social nature of building community



May _____

ORIENTATION LETTER

Dear Parent(s),

The ______________________ Kindergarten Program for __________ is ready for your child!
(school) (year)

It is such an exciting but scary time for your youngster and we want to make the start into school as easy as possible. We have several things planned in June to help with this transition.

- Registration and a brief Classroom Visit from now until school end.
- Tour Days for you and your child any time from 8:30–10:00 a.m., or 12:30–2:00 p.m. on any day of the week from June 2–6.
- Parent Orientation will be on June 9 at 7:00 p.m. in the school library for parents to become familiar with what to expect next year. Bring your questions and concerns.
- Stay and Play Day for your child on June 13. Call the school to book a morning (9:00–10:30) or afternoon (1:00–2:30) time for your child. The children from the current program will not be here during that day—just next year's children. It gives them a chance to become familiar with the classroom.
- Registration Day: Sept. 2, 8:30 a.m. Come to sign the papers and to book a home visit time and a staggered entry time for your child.
- Regular Classes do not begin for Kindergarten until Sept. 8.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please call the school at____________ (phone).

Sincerely,

Kindergarten Teacher

WELCOME LETTER

Dear Kindergarten Families,

We welcome you and your child to ________________________ (school) Kindergarten program! We are certainly looking forward to getting to know you and yours over the upcoming school year.

1. Children and Parent Forms

Enclosed are some forms that will provide necessary information about your child and yourself. This information will assist us in our program development. Please complete these forms and return them to us as soon as possible.

2. Snack Program

Throughout the year, we will have a Snack Program that will focus on NUTRITION, following Canada's Food Guide. Once a month, the children will be making their own snack on the Kindercook days. For the other days, we are asking the parents to bring in the snack—enough for all the children.

The kindergarten has plastic bowls, plates, cutlery and paper towels. Please have the snacks ready to be served (e.g., cut up the fruit ahead of time). We do have a microwave in the classroom, so we are able to quickly heat up any food.

Each month, you will receive a copy of the Snack Calendar. This will help you remember when to send in the snack. It would be wonderful for you to involve your child in preparing the snack on you day.

Remember that it is a SNACK that we will be sharing, and NOT a feast.

(continued)

3. Clothing

When the children are in Kindergarten, they are actively involved in their learning. Therefore, we advise you to send your child in comfortable play clothes. Your child may need a change of clothes during the year—either from a water table splash, or the mud puddle at recess. We ask you to send a spare set of clothes for your child. Label them and put them in a plastic bag with your child's name on it. Boots, shoes, coats should all be labelled with your child's name.

4. Water Cup/Glass

Brain research shows that when we are learning something new, our bodies need water! We encourage you to send a cup or glass for your child so he/she will never go thirsty! Please put your child's name on it and then he/she can pour a glass of the good stuff any time.

5. Inside Shoes

The school requires that we take off outdoor shoes and wear a pair of clean shoes for inside the school. This is really important for Kindergarten because we gather on the carpet area every day. We don't want street dirt where your child will be sitting. The best types of shoes are sneakers/running shoes because we go to the gym every week. Your child will be encouraged to be independent in putting shoes on, so please help them by getting a type and size that your child can manage on his/her own.

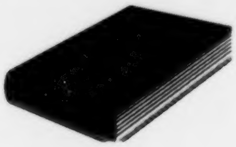
6. Recess

We will be sharing the school recess, and this can be the highlight or lowlight for your child. If children do not have the right type of clothes for the weather, they shiver, get wet, etc. It is not fun for them. We go outside **everyday** unless it is colder than minus 20 degrees. (We will be going outside with the children until everyone is settled and knows the routines.) There are always two teachers on supervision during recess.

(continued)

7. Library Day

We use the school library every **Friday** and children must return their books by Friday before they will be allowed to borrow any others. We have a black tub on the counter and returned books can be placed in there.



8. Mail Boxes

One of our goals is to keep parents informed of what is happening in the program. If we have any newsletters or information sheet to send home, we put them in your child's mailbox. Please check it every day.

9. Parents and Kindergarten

Our door is always open to you! Come in for a half-hour or the full time any day or every day. You can schedule a specific time or drop in "whenever you can". Your involvement is encouraged and always welcomed.

10. Book Club Forms

Because we believe young children learn so much from listening to stories, we will be sending home book offers to you on a regular basis. Of course, you are not obliged to participate, however, parents who have purchased books from these clubs have found them to be good value at lower than retail prices. Each time we send home a flier, the return date is written on it.

11. Photographs

We will be taking photos of the children throughout the year and collecting them for their scrapbook that we send home at the end of the year.

(continued)

12. Drop Off and Pick Up

The driveway for drop-off is right beside the Kindergarten room, so it is very handy for all parents.

In the past, we have had excellent cooperation and respect from parents about the times for pick-up and drop-off. We are prepared for the children ten minutes before starting time. We need the time before that for room set-up and material preparation.

Children who need to wait for parents to come get very worried and frustrated. We realize that there is the odd occasion for everyone to be late, but please do not do it on a regular basis. The staff often has meetings or professional development commitments after school as well. If by any chance the staff is required to leave before you pick your child up, we will have taken him/her to the safety of the office. You will find your child there.

For safety reasons, it is critical that we see you to know that you have picked up your child.

Thank you for helping us with all of the above items! We will be happy to answer any questions that you may have about any of them. We are looking forward to the upcoming year and trust that it will provide many happy and fun-filled learning experiences for your child.

Yours sincerely,

Kindergarten Teacher

PLEASE COME AND OBSERVE

I would like to invite you to spend some time in our classroom so you can see what school is like for your child. During your visit, you will be able to watch your child and then fill in an observation page.

Please complete the form below and return it as soon as possible so I can schedule visits and confirm your request. If arranging a time is difficult, please let me know so we can try to work something else out.

After your visit I would be happy to discuss your child's program in more detail or answer any questions you might have about our classroom. Thank you for considering this invitation and for taking an interest in your child's school experience.

Sincerely,

Kindergarten Teacher

--------------------------------(tear here)--------------------------------

The most convenient time for me to come for a classroom observation is:

Monday ___ Tuesday ___ Wednesday ___ Thursday ___ Friday ___

____9:15–9:45	1:45:2:15 ___
____9:45–10:15	2:15–2:45___
____10:30–11:00	2:45–3:15___
____11:00–12:00	

Comments:____

____

____

____

____

Child's name ________________________

Parent's signature____________________

Phone number_______________________

PARENT OBSERVATION SHEET
WELCOME TO OUR CLASS!

Parent's name ____________________ Date ____________________

Please take time to observe and complete any or all of the statements below.

1. When I watched my child in the classroom, I was pleased to see
   ____
   ____

2. When I watched my child in the classroom, I was surprised to see
   ____
   ____

3. My child interacted with ____________________

4. My child participated best

   ____ during whole class time
   ____ during individual activities
   ____ during small group work
   ____ at all times

5. My child seems most interested in ____________________
   ____

6. Something special I saw today was ____________________
   ____
   ____

7. My child's attitude toward school is ____________________
   ____

Please share your observations with your child and leave this page in the Parent Volunteer Book. I will file it in your child's Learning File later. If you have any questions or concerns that cannot be answered by your child, please see me or write them on the back of this page. Thank you for coming and come back soon!

OCTOBER KINDERGARTEN NEWSLETTER

September was a busy month, filled with adjustment to new routines and to the school environment. I appreciate all the support given by parents to ensure a successful transition.

In English language arts children learn language as they use it to communicate their thoughts, feelings and experiences; establish relationships with family members and friends; and strive to make sense and order of their world. To foster English language arts skills, I will continue with biweekly journal writing, daily lessons focusing on letter–sound correlation, opportunities for children to develop a bank of sight words and the home–school reading binders. During this month each child will have the opportunity to bring home our book featuring their Kindergarten classmates. I think you'll enjoy seeing everyone's "action shot" and having your child sharing the captions with you. We will begin a home reading program in late October. As it gets closer to the beginning of this program I will send out a more detailed letter. This month we will finish our Leo Lionni study and begin to look at Caldecott Medal books. As the children are becoming involved in meaningful "writing" to accompany their journal illustrations, Caldecott books will provide these young learners with great writing inspirations.

In Mathematics, we are going to continue to focus on the following concepts:

- one-to-one correspondence
- writing numbers
- introducing number words (zero to ten)
- patterning: identifying, extending and creating patterns
- sorting and classifying
- graphing
- recognizing calendar words.

Children will have both formal lessons and lots of individual hands-on learning using manipulatives to reinforce mathematics learning. For one of our mathematics activities, the children will be involved in creating their own alphabetized telephone book of classmates numbers. This is an excellent way for children to learn about alphabetizing and printing numbers in a meaningful context. If you have any concerns about your child's telephone number being copied by classmates, please let me know as soon as possible.

We have adopted a tree that we will visit monthly to observe, discuss and record seasonal changes. With the changing of the leaves, the colour in our natural environment leads to many wonderful explorations in science. The children will explore colours from both a scientific and an artistic perspective. To complement this focus, we will be going to the Muttart Art Gallery on October 21. This experience will provide the children with an opportunity to apply their knowledge of colour in a gallery context.

NOVEMBER KINDERGARTEN NEWSLETTER

Dear Parents,

This month I will use the theme of FAIRY TALES to develop the concept of PATTERNS, which I have already begun to introduce to the children.

In English Language Arts, the children will focus on the structure and characters of Fairy Tales. I will continue to encourage their skills with plot development and the development of characters. For example, characters are presented with obstacles which they must try and try again to overcome in order to be successful. I will continue to develop their awareness of initial consonant sound/letter associations and of rhyming word endings—using both listening and written words. They will have opportunities to print frequently used words—that are important to them.

In Mathematics, we will work on their awareness of pattern based on colour, shape and on the addition of 1. Children will practise with numbers 0 to 10. They will also work on linear measurement—what problems and questions can be solved through linear measurement. I am encouraging them to begin using appropriate and specific vocabulary in these situations, for example rather than "big," I am encouraging them to say "long," or "tall."

These and other subject area skills will be more precisely described in the children's report cards and during the **student-led conferences**. You will receive a package several days before the conference. Please bring this with you on the night of November 14. If you have questions before that, please give me a call. An evening for individual interviews has been booked for November 19. A sign-up sheet will be available at the school on the evening of the student-led-conferences.

SHARING

We are working on the concept of grouping by attributes and using appropriate and specific vocabulary to describe the rationale for groupings so it is wonderful to have several items each day that the children bring. This month perhaps you could look for items that relate to fairy tales, or books that are fairy tales. Thanks!

NEEDS

- for the castle – jewels (old costume jewelry)
  - anything to furnish the castle, such as a golden goblet that we are able to borrow for one day
- boxes, small and large—but none larger than a "shirt box"
- toilet paper rolls
- thin wire
- gold or purple wrapping paper (with design is fine)

END OF THE YEAR LETTER

Dear Families,

Our year is rapidly coming to a close. I hope you have enjoyed your year as much as I have enjoyed sharing this year with you. Thank you once again to the many parents that have given of their time, energy and support to myself and to the program throughout the year.

Your child's scrapbook is coming home with this letter. The scrapbook is really a portfolio of your child's work throughout the year. As you look through your child's work, you will see how he/she has grown in their number or letter knowledge and you will see recordings of ideas about Safety City, oviparous layers or metamorphosis. You will also see how your child's writing has developed from the writing of his/her name, to the writing of stories. The Celebration of Learning sheet and skill checklist have also been included. In reality then, this scrapbook is your child's report card.

I hope you can appreciate how much your child has grown and how much the children have learned about themselves, about each other, and about a myriad of other important things.

Besides learning the knowledge and skills that will help them to make the necessary learning connections next year, the children have also learned something of greater value. I suppose this is really why Kindergarten is so important. The children have built together, a common framework of knowledge and experiences. When the children came in September, they all had individual experiences to draw upon but there was no common ground to relate to. As the school year progressed and the children added the experiences from the stories we shared, the Anansi jokes, the songs and our field trips; we begsn to till the soil so that learning could happen. When the children shared their expertise and ideas, they became a community of learners and we heard "Remember when ...," "Anansi is playing another trick," or "See how the tadpole has grown." This is the soil, the fertile learning ground, upon which the grade one teachers depend. The experiences children have shared together fuels their later learnings and understanding. They have the group connections now that will help them continue to grow in their new community of learners.

I have enjoyed working with all of the families, and I hope that you have a wonderful summer.

Sincerely,

Kindergarten Teacher

KINDERNEWS

THEMES

FAMILY READING

NEWS

JUNK COLLECTION

FIELD TRIPS

RESOURCE SPEAKERS

KINDERCOOKING

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO . . .

SHOW AND TELL

Weekly Review | **What our week looks like from the students' point of view** | ***September 21***

Monday - popping popcorn—all over the place - leaf walk	Art by:
Tuesday - the leaf walk—collecting the leaves in my bag, they looked pretty, they smelled pretty - I liked recess at the creative playground	Art by: CARLA
Wednesday - going to the creative playground - playing and recording in pattern blocks - playing in the puzzles - I liked the caterpillars in the computer	Art by: BAILEY XOXO
Thursday - making our "leaf art" - working in the school - playing in blocks	Art by: MIKE XOXO
Friday - playing with space lego - recording in math - "falling experiment" - playing with my friends - painting	Art by: Katie

Next week

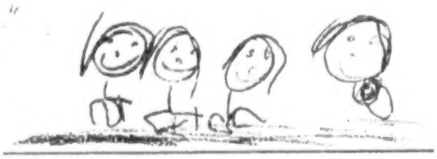
Look forward to more art, poetry

If you have "beautiful junk" for art collages, we can always use them. For example: styrofoam, old buttons, clothing material, coloured paper, … anything.

Weekly Review

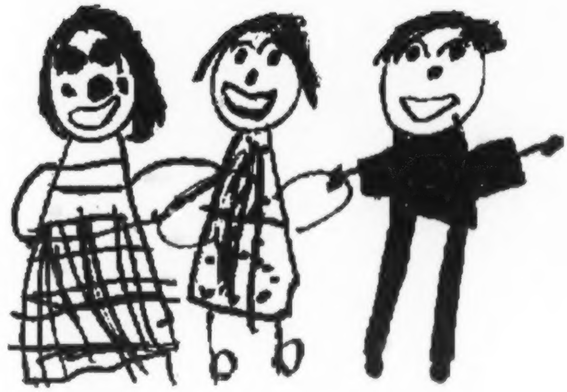
What our week looks like from the students' point of view

November 23

Monday • I learned how to make bread dinosaurs. • I learned how to make cookie dough dinosaurs. • I learned to make a stegosaurus out of clay.	Art by: Scott
Tuesday • I learned how to make a castle out of blocks. • I learned how to make an invitation. • I learned how to make a cool ship out of building blocks.	Art by: BaiLey
Wednesday • I learned how to make a neat rocket ship in math. • I learned how to make a meatball. • I learned how to be a witch in the gym. • I learned to be a cat in the gym.	Art by: MICHAEl
Thursday • I learned how to make Ankylosaurus out of potatoes. We put paper amour on him. • I learned how to make a dinosaur map in art. • I learned that a tiger is the only cat that swims.	Art by: RyaN
Friday • I learned how to write thank you. • I learned how to be a good audience. • I learned how to make a BIG dinosaur picture.	Art by: A[illegible]io 

Next week

BIBLIOGRAPHY



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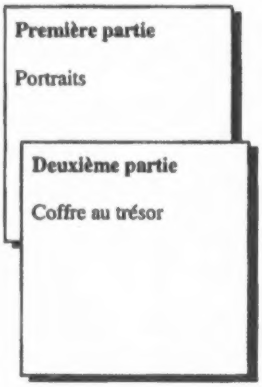
Comment consulter ce document d'accompagnement?

Ce document comprend une introduction, deux parties distinctes et des annexes.

En guise d'**introduction**, nous vous présentons **une vue d'ensemble du document**. On traite brièvement de l'historique, de l'état de la recherche, de la distinction entre le programme de maternelle pour l'immersion et pour le français langue première, des rôles de la maternelle et du modèle organisationnel des littératies multiples.



La **première partie**, intitulée « Portraits », trace le profil des enfants inscrits à la maternelle, de leurs foyers, des écoles et des communautés qui les entourent.

La **deuxième partie**, intitulée « Coffre au trésor », reprend les concepts du modèle proposé par le programme afin de vous aider à le concrétiser dans le quotidien avec votre classe. À la manière d'un coffre au trésor, vous y trouverez les composantes qui enrichiront votre planification et votre pratique. Cette partie est divisée en cinq chapitres :

1. **Comment planifier et gérer l'apprentissage?**
   Ce chapitre traite de la planification à court et à long terme, de même que de la planification à partir d'un thème ou d'un projet.
2. **Comment éveiller l'enfant aux sept domaines d'apprentissage?**
   On reprend les sept domaines d'apprentissage au programme et on propose des suggestions et des pistes pédagogiques pour aborder les RAS avec les enfants.
3. **Comment organiser le milieu d'apprentissage?**
   Ce chapitre traite de l'aménagement de la classe et des centres d'apprentissage.
4. **Comment miser sur le partenariat foyer-école-communauté?**
   On y retrouve une banque de stratégies et d'outils pour informer, communiquer et former un partenariat avec les parents.
5. **L'évaluation**
   Dans ce chapitre, on retrouve des pistes pour l'évaluation par l'enseignant, les parents, les enfants ainsi que pour le dépistage précoce.

Les annexes

L'introduction ainsi que chacune des parties sont accompagnées d'annexes placées à la fin du document. Ces annexes sont, pour la plupart, des outils de travail pour l'enseignante de la maternelle. On y trouve aussi de l'information additionnelle servant à préciser certains concepts importants trouvés dans le document.

Ce document d'accompagnement, qui ne fait que proposer des pistes, se complétera par votre réflexion, vos choix selon votre clientèle, et la personnalisation de vos interventions auprès des enfants. Les façons de faire qui réussissent bien auprès des enfants sont multiples. Ce n'est qu'à partir de votre réalité que vous pourrez faire les choix qui s'imposent. *Les lecteurs désirant plus de renseignements peuvent consulter la section Annexes.* De plus, on trouve à la fin de l'introduction et de chaque partie une bibliographie des documents consultés.

Tout le long du texte, vous trouverez quatre types de boîtes situées en marge, à la gauche du texte :

Suggestion pédagogique

Suggestion pédagogique : donne des suggestions pédagogiques additionnelles.

Vivre en français

Vivre en français : donne des pistes quant à la construction de la langue et l'appréciation de la culture française.

Saviez-vous que...

Saviez-vous que... : sert à définir des termes, ou à expliquer davantage un concept.

? Regard critique

-

? *Regard critique* : vous amène à vous poser des questions sur votre lecture, votre façon de faire et d'être avec les enfants, les parents, la communauté, etc.

📖

Le symbole du livre : indique la présence d'une bibliographie. Il est utilisé pour indiquer les ressources qui ont servi à l'élaboration du présent document. Ces ressources sont énumérées à la fin de chaque partie correspondante.

➳

La flèche : vous réfère à une autre partie ou à une autre section du document.

Bonne route!